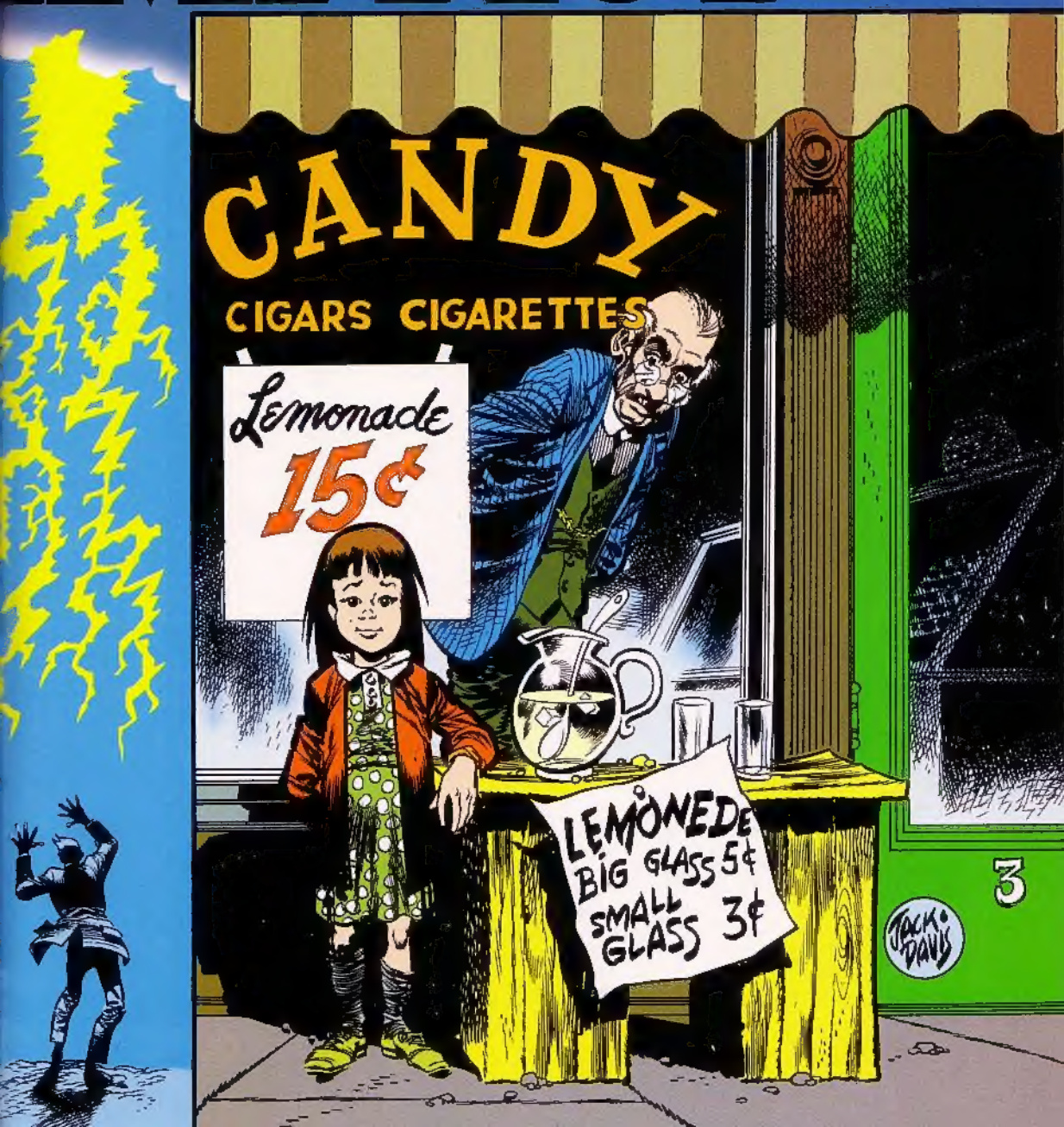
ORIGINAL EC COMICS FROM THE 1950s!

TALES DESIGNED TO CARRY AN...

IMPACT

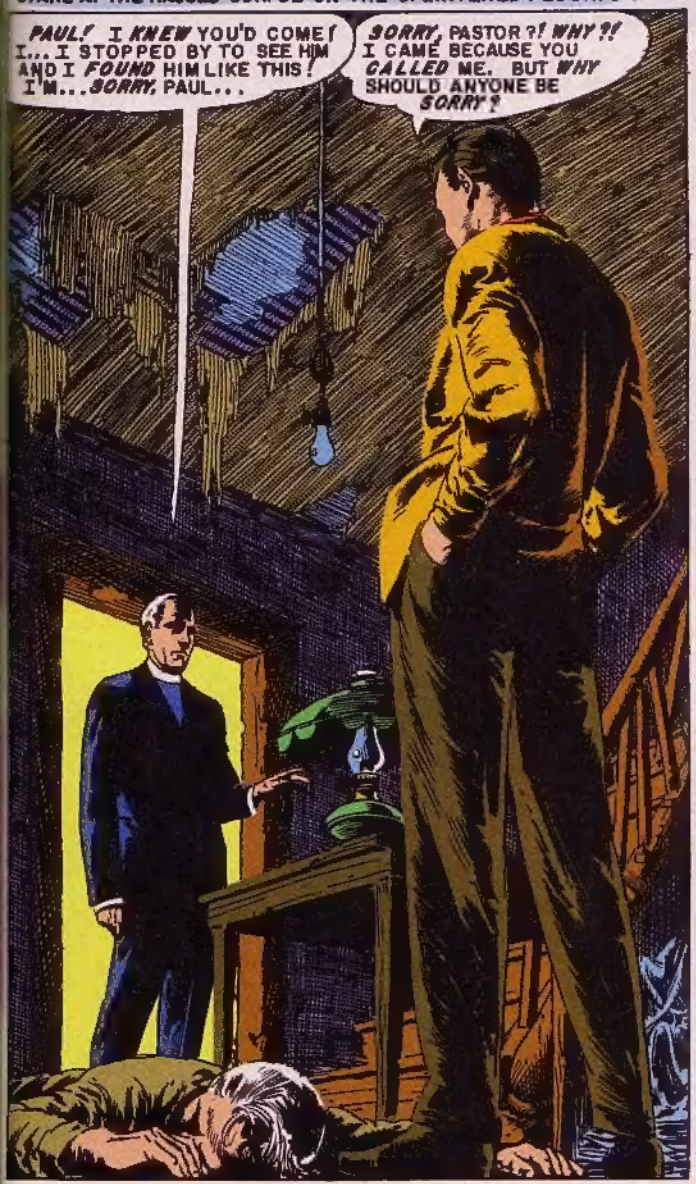
2.50
4.00
CANADA

NO. 3
JUNE



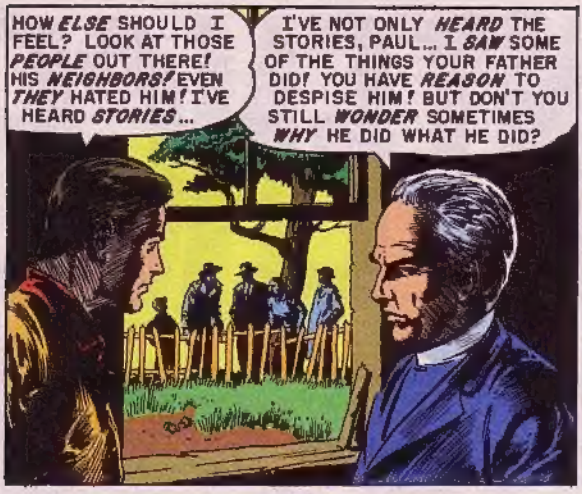
LIFE SENTENCE

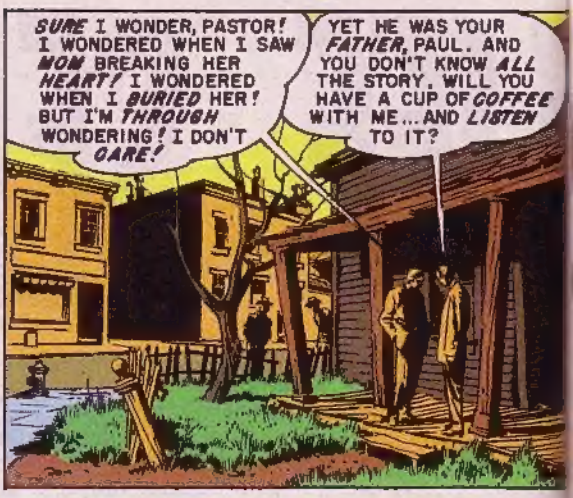
THE ROOM IS A PIG-STY, LITTERED WITH THE FILTH OF THIRTY YEARS. SOMEWHERE IN THE DANK, REEKING OLD HOUSE YOU CAN HEAR RATS SCURRYING. THE STENCH CLOGS YOUR NOSTRILS. YOU STAND FOR A MOMENT IN THE DOORWAY AS PASTOR EDWARDS HURRIES TOWARD YOU. AND THERE IS NO PITY IN YOU AS YOU STARE AT THE RAGGED CORPSE ON THE SPLINTERED FLOOR. . .


PAUL! I KNEW YOU'D COME! I... I STOPPED BY TO SEE HIM AND I FOUND HIM LIKE THIS! I'M... SORRY, PAUL...
SORRY, PASTOR?! WHY?! I CAME BECAUSE YOU CALLED ME. BUT WHY SHOULD ANYONE BE SORRY?

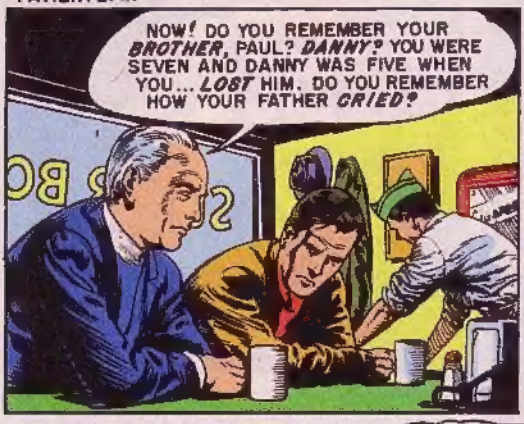
PAUL! IT'S YOUR FATHER! HE'S DEAD! YOUR FATHER...
AM I SUPPOSED TO SPEAK WELL OF HIM NOW... BECAUSE HE'S DEAD, PASTOR? WILL HIS DEATH BRING MOM BACK? WILL IT MAKE UP FOR WHAT HE DID TO US?

I ASSUME YOU CALLED ME TO CLAIM HIS BODY! WELL, I'M SORRY! HE WAS NOTHING TO ME! THE STATE CAN BURY HIM... IN POTTER'S FIELD!
I SEE! I WAS AFRAID YOU'D FEEL LIKE THIS...


HOW *ELSE* SHOULD I FEEL? LOOK AT THOSE *PEOPLE* OUT THERE! HIS *NEIGHBORS!* EVEN *THEY* HATED HIM! I'VE HEARD *STORIES*...
I'VE NOT ONLY *HEARD* THE STORIES, PAUL... I *SAW* SOME OF THE THINGS YOUR FATHER DID! YOU HAVE *REASON* TO DESPISE HIM! BUT DON'T YOU STILL *WONDER* SOMETIMES *WHY* HE DID WHAT HE DID?


SURE I WONDER, PASTOR! I WONDERED WHEN I SAW *MOM* BREAKING HER *HEART!* I WONDERED WHEN I *BURIED* HER! BUT I'M *THROUGH* WONDERING! I DON'T *CARE!*
YET HE WAS YOUR *FATHER*, PAUL. AND YOU DON'T KNOW *ALL* THE STORY. WILL YOU HAVE A CUP OF *COFFEE* WITH ME... AND *LISTEN* TO IT?

YOU DON'T WANT TO LISTEN. BUT YOU OWE SO MUCH TO PASTOR EDWARDS. HE'S BEEN PART OF YOUR LIFE FOR SO LONG. YOU WALK ACROSS TO THE COFFEE SHOP WITH HIM. AND YOU LISTEN... PATIENTLY...


NOW! DO YOU REMEMBER YOUR *BROTHER*, PAUL? *DANNY?* YOU WERE SEVEN AND DANNY WAS FIVE WHEN YOU... *LOST* HIM. DO YOU REMEMBER HOW YOUR FATHER *CRIED?*

"DO YOU REMEMBER HOW TALL HE WAS TILL THEN, PAUL? HOW STRAIGHT? HOW HIS SHOULDERS BENT AND ALL THE LIFE SEEMED TO GO OUT OF HIM WHEN THE DOCTOR TOLD HIM? AND HOW HE HELD YOUR MOTHER?"

DEAD!? OUR BABY IS... *DEAD?!*
WHAT CAN I *SAY*, MR. COOPER? I *DID* THE BEST I *COULD!* BUT SOMETIMES TYPHOID *STRIKES* LIKE THAT... *QUICKLY!* I WISH I COULD HAVE DONE *MORE!* I'M... I'M *SORRY!*

"DO YOU REMEMBER AFTERWARD, PAUL? YOUR FATHER JUST SAT THERE, HOLDING YOUR MOTHER'S HAND. THEN, HE CALLED YOU OVER..."

"YOU DIDN'T HATE YOUR FATHER THEN, DID YOU, PAUL? HE CHANGED AFTER THAT. HE DIDN'T SPEAK MUCH. BUT HE WENT ON. HE RAN HIS SMALL HARDWARE MANUFACTURING BUSINESS JUST AS HE'D DONE BEFORE..."

RALPH, *MUST* YOU GO? CAN'T YOU *MISS* THIS CONVENTION? IS IT *REALLY* SO IMPORTANT?

I'M AFRAID *SO*, MARGARET. I'VE *STILL* GOT TO EARN A *LIVING!* NO ONE WANTS TO KNOW ABOUT A MAN'S *PERSONAL SORROW!* PEOPLE ARE *LIKE* THAT...

SO LONG, PAUL. BE A *GOOD BOY* AND I'LL *BRING* YOU SOMETHING FROM *NEW YORK!* SOMETHING *NICE!*

TAKE *CARE* OF YOURSELF, RALPH. AND... RALPH, *DON'T* BE *BITTER!* *PROMISE?*

"SO YOUR FATHER WENT TO THAT HARDWARE MANUFACTURER'S CONVENTION. BUT HE DIDN'T BRING HOME SOMETHING NICE. REMEMBER? HE BROUGHT HOME COLDNESS... ANGER... AND PAIN!"

RALPH! I DIDN'T EXPECT YOU BACK SO *SOON!*

I MADE UP MY MIND ON THE SPUR OF THE MOMENT! I... GOT... *FED UP* WITH *HARDWARE*... AND *CROWDS*...

RALPH! AREN'T YOU EVEN GOING TO *KISS* ME "HELLO"?

I'M GOING TO MY *ROOM!* I'M *TIRED!*

DAD...!

"THAT WAS WHEN THINGS REALLY BEGAN TO CHANGE, WASN'T IT? YOUR MOTHER TOLD ME, AFTERWARD, HOW YOU RAN TO YOUR FATHER EAGERLY... AND HOW HE GREETED YOU..."

DAD, YOU'RE *BACK*...

GET OUT OF MY WAY! I SAID I'M TIRED!

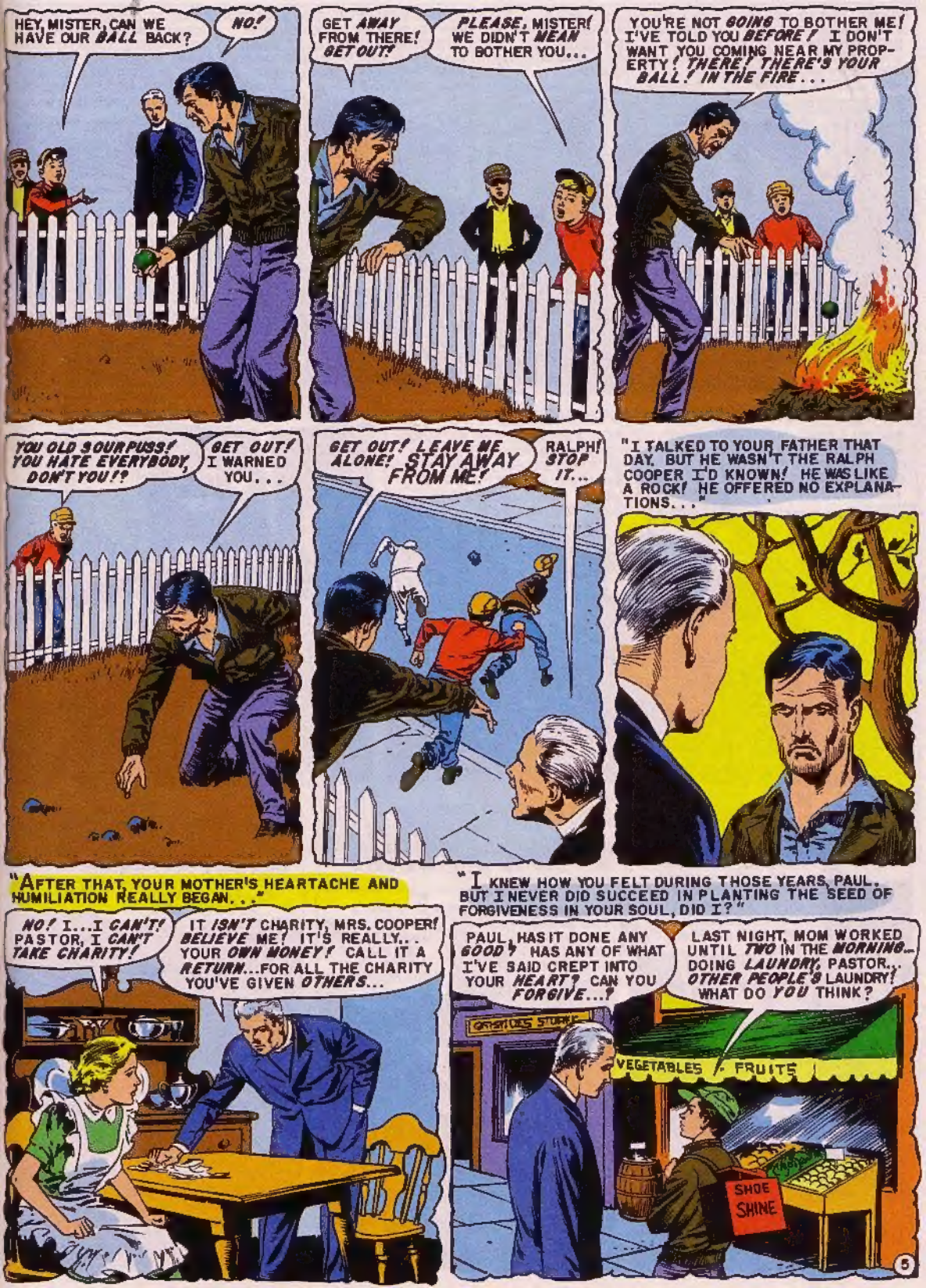
RALPH! RALPH, *PLEASE!* WHAT'S *WRONG?* *RALPH?*

MOM, HE... HE PUSHED ME *AWAY.* HE... HE ACTS LIKE HE DOESN'T *WANT* ME! *WHY,* MOM? *WHY?*

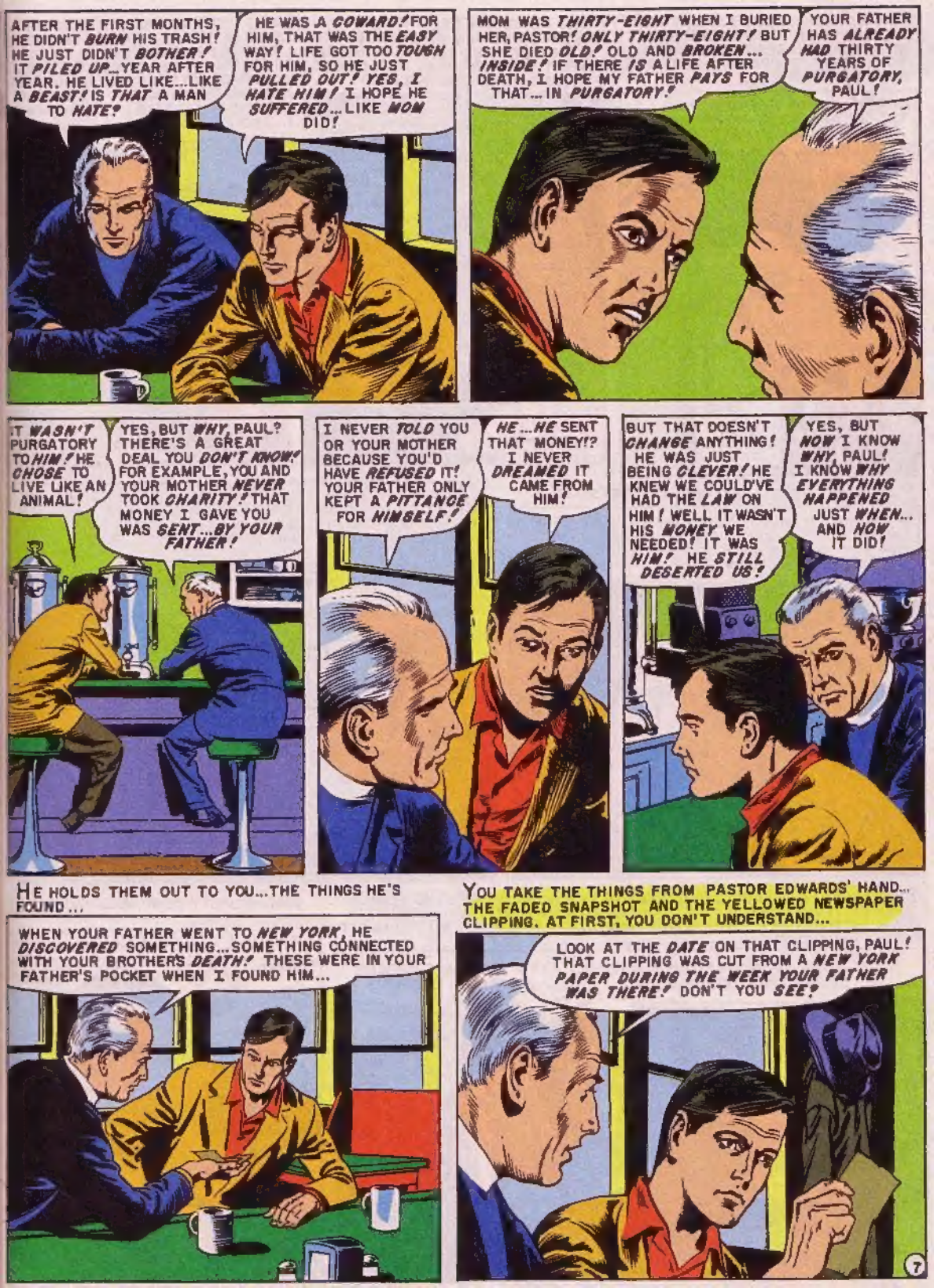
"HOW MANY TIMES YOU ASKED YOUR MOTHER THAT QUESTION, PAUL! HER HEART ACHED SO FOR YOU. YOU NEVER KNEW THAT SHE CAME TO ME A FEW DAYS LATER, DID YOU?"

PASTOR, IT... SOB... IT'S LIKE A *NIGHTMARE!* RALPH ISN'T *RALPH* ANYMORE! HE ACTS AS THOUGH HE *HATES* US... AS THOUGH HE HATES *EVERYONE!*

HE STAYS IN HIS ROOM! HE WON'T LET US HAVE VISITORS! PASTOR, WHAT'S HAPPENED TO HIM? WHY DOES HE HATE THE WHOLE WORLD?
THERE'S ONLY ONE EXPLANATION, MRS. COOPER! SOMEHOW, THE DEATH OF YOUR SON HAS WARPED HIM. BUT YOUR HUSBAND IS A GOOD MAN. SUPPOSE I TALK TO HIM? I'LL STOP BY THIS EVENING...
"ONLY I DIDN'T SPEAK TO YOUR FATHER! NOT THAT NIGHT, REMEMBER, RALPH? I ARRIVED TOO LATE. I DIDN'T LEARN WHAT HAPPENED UNTIL AFTERWARD. YOUR FATHER DID A TERRIBLE THING THAT NIGHT..."
RALPH!? WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
IT'S PRETTY OBVIOUS, ISN'T IT, MARGARET? I'M LEAVING YOU!
YOU'RE...LEAVING!? RALPH, NO! YOU'RE... JOKING! WHY!? AT LEAST TELL ME WHY!
I'LL DO WITHOUT THE LAST FOND EMBRACE! AS TO WHY... I'M JUST SICK OF THE TREADMILL, THAT'S ALL! I'M SICK OF WORK ...OF ROUTINE... OF PEOPLE!
WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE WHY I'M LEAVING?! THIS WAY IS BEST FOR ALL OF US! DO YOURSELF A FAVOR, MARGARET! FORGET ME ...THE WAY I'M GOING TO FORGET YOU!
"IF YOU BEGAN TO HATE YOUR FATHER AFTER THAT...WELL, I CAN UNDERSTAND, PAUL. BUT YOUR MOTHER NEVER STOPPED LOVING HIM. NOT EVEN THEN. I KNOW. I TRIED TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE SITUATION..."
MRS. COOPER, DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? I KNOW WHERE YOUR HUSBAND IS! I ASKED THE POLICE TO LOCATE HIM. HE'S BOUGHT THAT OLD HOUSE ON ELM STREET...
I KNOW! RALPH'S ATTORNEY TOLD ME! RALPH HAS SOLD OUT HIS BUSINESS, TOO!
THEN, THERE'LL BE... MONEY! IF YOU DON'T CARE WHERE HE IS, AT LEAST HAVE HIM BROUGHT INTO COURT. HE OWES YOU SUPPORT, IF NOTHING ELSE...
NO! I WON'T MAKE TROUBLE FOR HIM, PASTOR! I...I COULDN'T! PAUL AND I WILL MANAGE ...SOMEHOW...
"I SAW YOUR FATHER ABOUT A MONTH AFTER THAT, PAUL. THE CHANGE IN HIM WAS GREAT, AND IT WASN'T A PLEASANT THING TO SEE..."
4


HEY, MISTER, CAN WE HAVE OUR BALL BACK?
NO!
GET AWAY FROM THERE! GET OUT!
PLEASE, MISTER! WE DIDN'T MEAN TO BOTHER YOU...
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BOTHER ME! I'VE TOLD YOU BEFORE! I DON'T WANT YOU COMING NEAR MY PROPERTY! THERE! THERE'S YOUR BALL! IN THE FIRE...
YOU OLD SOURPUSS! YOU HATE EVERYBODY, DON'T YOU!?
GET OUT! I WARNED YOU...
GET OUT! LEAVE ME ALONE! STAY AWAY FROM ME!
RALPH! STOP IT...
"I TALKED TO YOUR FATHER THAT DAY. BUT HE WASN'T THE RALPH COOPER I'D KNOWN! HE WAS LIKE A ROCK! HE OFFERED NO EXPLANATIONS..."
"AFTER THAT, YOUR MOTHER'S HEARTACHE AND HUMILIATION REALLY BEGAN..."
NO! I...I CAN'T! PASTOR, I CAN'T TAKE CHARITY!
IT ISN'T CHARITY, MRS. COOPER! BELIEVE ME! IT'S REALLY... YOUR OWN MONEY! CALL IT A RETURN...FOR ALL THE CHARITY YOU'VE GIVEN OTHERS...
"I KNEW HOW YOU FELT DURING THOSE YEARS, PAUL. BUT I NEVER DID SUCCEED IN PLANTING THE SEED OF FORGIVENESS IN YOUR SOUL, DID I?"
PAUL, HAS IT DONE ANY GOOD? HAS ANY OF WHAT I'VE SAID CREPT INTO YOUR HEART? CAN YOU FORGIVE...?
LAST NIGHT, MOM WORKED UNTIL TWO IN THE MORNING... DOING LAUNDRY, PASTOR... OTHER PEOPLE'S LAUNDRY! WHAT DO YOU THINK?
GROCERIES STORE
VEGETABLES / FRUITS
SHOE SHINE
5

THOSE YEARS WEREN'T PLEASANT, PASTOR EDWARDS! BECAUSE OF HIM, WE HAD TO TAKE CHARITY! WE SUFFERED! HOW COULD I FORGIVE?
BUT DIDN'T YOUR FATHER SUFFER, TOO? IN HIS OWN WAY? YOU'VE SEEN HOW HE LIVED!
SUFFERED!? NO ONE FORCED HIM TO BECOME A RECLUSE! OTHER MEN HAVE LOST SONS! DANNY'S DEATH DIDN'T GIVE HIM THE RIGHT TO DO WHAT HE DID!
NO, IT DIDN'T! AND YOU'RE RIGHT, PAUL. NO ONE FORCED HIM TO BECOME A RECLUSE. BUT HIS LIFE WASN'T PLEASANT, BELIEVE ME! I USED TO SEE HIM... ONCE IN A WHILE.
"... AND I'D PLEAD WITH HIM..."
RALPH! FOR YOUR OWN SAKE! GET OUT OF THIS... THIS PLACE! IT... IT'S NOT FIT FOR A HUMAN BEING! HOW LONG CAN YOU GO ON LIKE THIS?
FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE! I DIDN'T ASK YOU TO COME BACK HERE! WHY CAN'T YOU LEAVE ME ALONE? THAT'S ALL I ASK! JUST LEAVE ME ALONE!
WHAT WAS THAT?
A BRICK! SOMEONE MUST HAVE THROWN IT!
SOMEONE!? IT COULD HAVE BEEN ANYONE ON THE BLOCK! THEY ALL HATE ME! ALL RIGHT, LET 'EM! I DON'T WANT 'EM! I DON'T WANT ANYONE! THEY WANT TO DRIVE ME OUT, BUT THEY WON'T!
THEY NEVER DID DRIVE HIM OUT. IN THE END, THEY LEFT HIM ALONE. HE LOCKED HIMSELF IN THAT HOVEL AND THEY ALMOST FORGOT HE EXISTED. I ONLY SAW HIM ALIVE ONCE AGAIN AFTER THAT...
RALPH, PLEASE... OPEN THE DOOR? LET ME TALK TO YOU! I CAN SEE YOU! I KNOW YOU'RE THERE!
I TOLD YOU! I DON'T WANT ANYONE! GO AWAY! AFTER THIS YOU WON'T SEE ME!
"NEXT TIME THERE WERE PLANKS NAILED OVER THE WINDOWS AND YOUR FATHER DIDN'T ANSWER WHEN I CALLED. HOW HE LIVED FROM THEN ON, I DON'T KNOW..."
RALPH! ARE YOU IN THERE!? ANSWER ME...!
6


AFTER THE FIRST MONTHS, HE DIDN'T BURN HIS TRASH! HE JUST DIDN'T BOTHER! IT PILED UP...YEAR AFTER YEAR. HE LIVED LIKE...LIKE A BEAST! IS THAT A MAN TO HATE?
HE WAS A COWARD! FOR HIM, THAT WAS THE EASY WAY! LIFE GOT TOO TOUGH FOR HIM, SO HE JUST PULLED OUT! YES, I HATE HIM! I HOPE HE SUFFERED...LIKE MOM DID!
MOM WAS THIRTY-EIGHT WHEN I BURIED HER, PASTOR! ONLY THIRTY-EIGHT! BUT SHE DIED OLD! OLD AND BROKEN... INSIDE! IF THERE IS A LIFE AFTER DEATH, I HOPE MY FATHER PAYS FOR THAT...IN PURGATORY!
YOUR FATHER HAS ALREADY HAD THIRTY YEARS OF PURGATORY, PAUL!
IT WASN'T PURGATORY TO HIM! HE CHOSE TO LIVE LIKE AN ANIMAL!
YES, BUT WHY, PAUL? THERE'S A GREAT DEAL YOU DON'T KNOW! FOR EXAMPLE, YOU AND YOUR MOTHER NEVER TOOK CHARITY! THAT MONEY I GAVE YOU WAS SENT...BY YOUR FATHER!
I NEVER TOLD YOU OR YOUR MOTHER BECAUSE YOU'D HAVE REFUSED IT! YOUR FATHER ONLY KEPT A PITTANCE FOR HIMSELF!
HE...HE SENT THAT MONEY!? I NEVER DREAMED IT CAME FROM HIM!
BUT THAT DOESN'T CHANGE ANYTHING! HE WAS JUST BEING CLEVER! HE KNEW WE COULD'VE HAD THE LAW ON HIM! WELL, IT WASN'T HIS MONEY WE NEEDED! IT WAS HIM! HE STILL DESERTED US!
YES, BUT NOW I KNOW WHY, PAUL! I KNOW WHY EVERYTHING HAPPENED JUST WHEN... AND HOW IT DID!
HE HOLDS THEM OUT TO YOU...THE THINGS HE'S FOUND...
WHEN YOUR FATHER WENT TO NEW YORK, HE DISCOVERED SOMETHING...SOMETHING CONNECTED WITH YOUR BROTHER'S DEATH! THESE WERE IN YOUR FATHER'S POCKET WHEN I FOUND HIM...
YOU TAKE THE THINGS FROM PASTOR EDWARDS' HAND... THE FADED SNAPSHOT AND THE YELLOWED NEWSPAPER CLIPPING. AT FIRST, YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND...
LOOK AT THE DATE ON THAT CLIPPING, PAUL! THAT CLIPPING WAS CUT FROM A NEW YORK PAPER DURING THE WEEK YOUR FATHER WAS THERE! DON'T YOU SEE?
7

FOR A MOMENT, NO!... YOU DON'T SEE! BUT THEN YOU REMEMBER... SOMETHING YOU READ ONCE... ABOUT PEOPLE LIKE THE PERSON IN THE CLIPPING...

YOU REMEMBER READING ABOUT PEOPLE WHO CAN BE EXPOSED TO A DISEASE, PICK UP THE GERM, AND INFECT OTHER PEOPLE... ALL WITHOUT THEMSELVES BEING INFECTED...

DANNY DIED OF *TYPHOID*, PAUL! THE DOCTORS WERE NEVER CERTAIN *HOW* HE BECAME *INFECTED!*

POLICE SEEK CAUSE OF NEAR-EPIDEMIC!

Police today are seeking the man believed to have infected at least fifteen persons at a dinner given by the Convention of Hardware Manufacturers in this city. It is assumed that a Typhoid carrier was present at the dinner. A check of all convention attendees, however, failed to uncover

A... A *TYPHOID CARRIER!?* YOU'RE SAYING *DAD* WAS THE MAN WHO INFECTED THOSE PEOPLE ... AND DANNY!? YOU'RE SAYING *DAD* WAS A *TYPHOID CARRIER*... AND *KNEW IT!?*

YES, PAUL! HE PROBABLY CHECKED AND MADE CERTAIN! THEN HE CAME HOME! THEY *LOCK AWAY* TYPHOID CARRIERS, PAUL ... FOR *LIFE!*

SUDDENLY, IT'S ALL SO EASY TO UNDERSTAND...

IF...IF THEY'D HAVE LOCKED *DAD* AWAY, *WE*...MOM AND ME... *WE'D* HAVE SUFFERED *MORE!* SO HE *TRIED* TO MAKE US *HATE HIM*...*TRIED* TO MAKE US *FORGET HIM!* *DIDN'T* HE?

YES, PAUL! HE GAVE HIMSELF A *LIFE SENTENCE!* HE BOUGHT THAT OLD HOUSE AND WAS CONTENT TO CATCH RARE GLIMPSES OF YOU OR YOUR MOTHER WHEN YOU PASSED BY. AND IF HE DROVE PEOPLE AWAY, OR KEPT THE KIDS' TOYS, IT WAS FOR THEIR *OWN GOOD!* HE LIVED AND DIED *ALONE*... IN *SQUALOR*... OUT OF *LOVE* FOR *YOU* AND *YOUR MOTHER*, PAUL!

YES! I...I CAN *SEE* THAT NOW, PASTOR! I... I'D BETTER GET GOING!

THEY'RE STILL ACROSS THE STREET WHEN YOU COME OUT... THE PEOPLE ...THE BITTER, HATING, PEOPLE. THEY'LL NEVER KNOW! THEY'LL HATE FOR A LITTLE WHILE LONGER, AND THEN THEY'LL FORGET. BUT YOU WON'T FORGET! NOT EVER...

HOLD ON, MISTER! JUST *WHERE* DO YOU THINK *YOU'RE* GOING?

IT'S ALL RIGHT, OFFICER! *I'M* RALPH COOPER'S *SON!*

TY MORGUE

AND YOU LIFT YOUR HEAD PROUDLY...

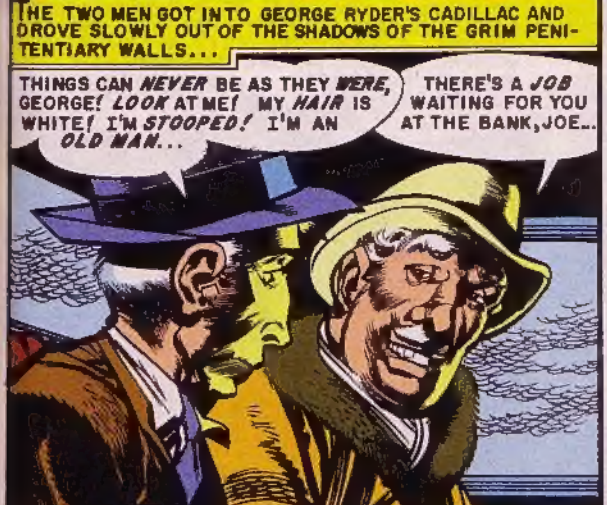
I'M GOING TO RIDE DOWNTOWN WITH MY *DAD!*

THE DEBT

EIGHT YEARS BEFORE, IT HAD SEEMED LIKE A BAD DREAM TO JOE WILER. THEY'D CLOSED THE PONDEROUS PRISON GATES BEHIND HIM... LOCKED HIM OFF FROM FAMILIAR SIGHTS AND SOUNDS AND FRIENDS... AND LOCKED HIM INSIDE A STRANGE NEW WORLD OF BARS AND GREY CONCRETE WALLS AND UNFRIENDLY FACES. THEN JOE DID HIS TEN YEAR SENTENCE IN EIGHT, AND COMING OUT SEEMED LIKE A BAD DREAM TOO, FOR HIS ONCE FAMILIAR WORLD HAD CHANGED. ONLY GEORGE RYDER HADN'T CHANGED...

MR. RYDER! GEORGE! HOW GOOD OF YOU TO BE HERE, AFTER... AFTER WHAT HAPPENED!
IT'S THE LEAST I COULD DO... FOR A FRIEND, JOE! AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, THE PAST EIGHT YEARS ARE GONE AND FORGOTTEN! I WANT EVERYTHING TO BE AS IT WAS BEFORE THE TROUBLE!
JACK RAVS

THE TWO MEN GOT INTO GEORGE RYDER'S CADILLAC AND DROVE SLOWLY OUT OF THE SHADOWS OF THE GRIM PENITENTIARY WALLS...


THINGS CAN NEVER BE AS THEY WERE, GEORGE! LOOK AT ME! MY HAIR IS WHITE! I'M STOOPED! I'M AN OLD MAN...
THERE'S A JOB WAITING FOR YOU AT THE BANK, JOE...

JOE WILER STARED SILENTLY AHEAD THROUGH THE CRYSTAL CLEAR WINDSHIELD. HE SAW NOT THE BEAUTY OF THE OPEN WORLD BEFORE HIM, BUT RATHER THE LONG AGO PAST... THOSE WILD DAYS OF HIS SON... TED...

THE MEMORIES OF THOSE DAYS BROUGHT VIVID PICTURES TO JOE WILER'S MIND. AND YET IT SEEMED A PART OF ANOTHER MAN'S LIFE, NOT HIS OWN! JOE REMEMBERED ONE NIGHT...

IS *THIS* THE TIME FOR A FIFTEEN YEAR OLD BOY TO BE COMING *HOME*? TWO O'CLOCK IN THE *MORNING*?

WHAT *DIFFERENCE* DOES IT MAKE? IT'S *SUMMER!* I DON'T HAVE TO GET UP TO GO TO *SCHOOL!* SO GET OFF MY *BACK*, PA! I DON'T NEED A *NURSEMAID!*

JOE REMEMBERED HOW HE COULD NEVER EVEN GET MAD AT HIS SON... NOT REALLY. HE COULD ONLY *ACT* MAD...

DON'T TALK TO *ME* THAT WAY, TED! YOU THINK I DON'T *KNOW* WHERE YOU'VE BEEN AND WHAT YOU'VE BEEN UP TO?! THOSE *HOODLUMS*... YOUR *PALS*... *STEALING A CAR...!*

STEALING!? WE... WE JUST TOOK A *RIDE!*

...AND THE *POLICE* PICKED UP THE *LOT* OF YOU... AND YOU GOT *ANOTHER* RIDE... TO *JAIL!* HOW DID IT *FEEL* BEING IN A CELL... LIKE A *CRIMINAL?!*

IT WAS ONLY FOR AN *HOUR!* THEN THE GUY WHO *OWNED* THE CAR CAME DOWN! BUT HE *DIDN'T* BRING ANY *CHARGES!*

SO CAPTAIN HIGGINS *TOLD* ME WHEN HE *PHONED*, TED! YOU WERE *LUCKY* THIS TIME! BUT *NEXT* TIME... WELL, THERE'D BETTER NOT *BE* A NEXT TIME!

LAY OFF, PA. WILL YOU! I'M TIRED!

BUT THERE'D *BEEN* A NEXT TIME... AND *MANY* TIMES AFTER THAT DURING THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED. BUT ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, USUALLY WITH JOE'S HELP, TED HAD TIME AND AGAIN SQUEEZED *OUT* OF SERIOUS TROUBLE...

YOU *KNOW* I DON'T MIND GIVING YOU *TIME OFF*, JOE... BUT YOU'D BE *BETTER OFF* LETTING THAT BOY OF YOURS *TAKE* HIS MEDICINE FOR ONCE!

TED'S *YOUNG*, MR. RYDER! HE'S *ONLY* TWENTY-TWO! *HE'LL* STRAIGHTEN HIMSELF OUT! HE *PROMISED...*

PROMISED!? GOOD LORD, MAN... TED ISN'T A *KID* ANY LONGER! HE OUGHT TO BE WORKING... PAYING HIS OWN WAY! HE'S *SPOILED ROTTEN*, JOE!

IT HASN'T BEEN *EASY* FOR HIM... GROWING UP WITHOUT A *MOTHER!* HE'S BEEN ON HIS *OWN* TOO MUCH!

SO JOE WILER HAD MADE EXCUSES FOR TED. BUT THE TIME CAME WHEN EXCUSES WERE NOT ENOUGH...
I KNOW BUD MICHAELS IS EVERYTHING YOU SAY HE IS, MR. WILER... A THIEF, PERHAPS... A CHEAP HOODLUM... BUT HE STILL GETS THE PROTECTION OF THE LAW!
BUT, CAPTAIN HIGGINS! TED AND HIS GIRL... LOIS... THEY WERE JUST TAKING A WALK... NOT HARMING ANYONE! WHAT ABOUT PROTECTING THEM? IF MICHAELS HADN'T PASSED THAT REMARK ABOUT LOIS, TED WOULDN'T HAVE HIT HIM!
UNFORTUNATELY FOR TED, THERE AREN'T ANY WITNESSES THAT MICHAELS SAID ANYTHING WRONG! THE GIRL'S WORD ISN'T ENOUGH! I'M AFRAID YOU'RE IN FOR IT THIS TIME, TED!
PLEASE, CAPTAIN! IF EVER I NEEDED A BREAK, I NEED ONE NOW! LOIS AND I ARE GOING TO BE MARRIED!
MARRIED!? ON WHAT, TED?! YOU HAVEN'T EVEN GOT A JOB! IT'S HARD ENOUGH FOR ME TO SUPPORT YOU ALONE...
I'LL GET A JOB FIRST, DAD! I'VE BEEN LOOKING! NOBODY WANTS TO GIVE ME A BREAK! I'VE GOT A BAD REPUTATION! OKAY, THAT'S MY FAULT, BUT I'VE GOT TO HAVE A CHANCE!
YOU HEAR THAT, CAPTAIN? HE WANTS TO STRAIGHTEN HIMSELF OUT... GET A JOB... GET MARRIED!
JOE, I'VE HEARD TED'S GLIB TALK BEFORE! I THINK THIS IS MORE OF THE SAME! BUT... WELL... FOR YOUR SAKE... BUT NEXT TIME, I THROW THE BOOK AT HIM!
THAT SAME DAY, JOE HAD TAKEN TED TO THE BANK... TO GEORGE RYDER'S OFFICE.
JOE, I'D DO ANYTHING FOR YOU! ANYTHING... BUT THIS!
GEORGE, LISTEN. YOU SAID TED OUGHT TO BE WORKING! ALL RIGHT THEN! LET HIM WORK!
HE WANTS TO SETTLE DOWN! I KNOW HE MEANS IT THIS TIME, GEORGE! GIVE HIM A CHANCE! PLEASE...
IT'S NOT MY MONEY IN THIS BANK, JOE! IT'S THE DEPOSITORS'! I'M RESPONSIBLE! NO! I... I CAN'T DO IT! I'D BE CRAZY!
MR. RYDER, I'VE GIVEN UP ALL MY OLD FRIENDS! LOIS MADE ME DO IT! IF YOU GIVE ME A BREAK, SIR, I COULDN'T LET HER DOWN... OR MY FATHER...
VERY WELL, TED! BUT GET THIS STRAIGHT! YOUR FATHER HAS WORKED IN THIS BANK FOR YEARS! ONE BAD ACT BY YOU, AND HE'LL BE THROUGH HERE... UNDERSTAND? THROUGH!
3

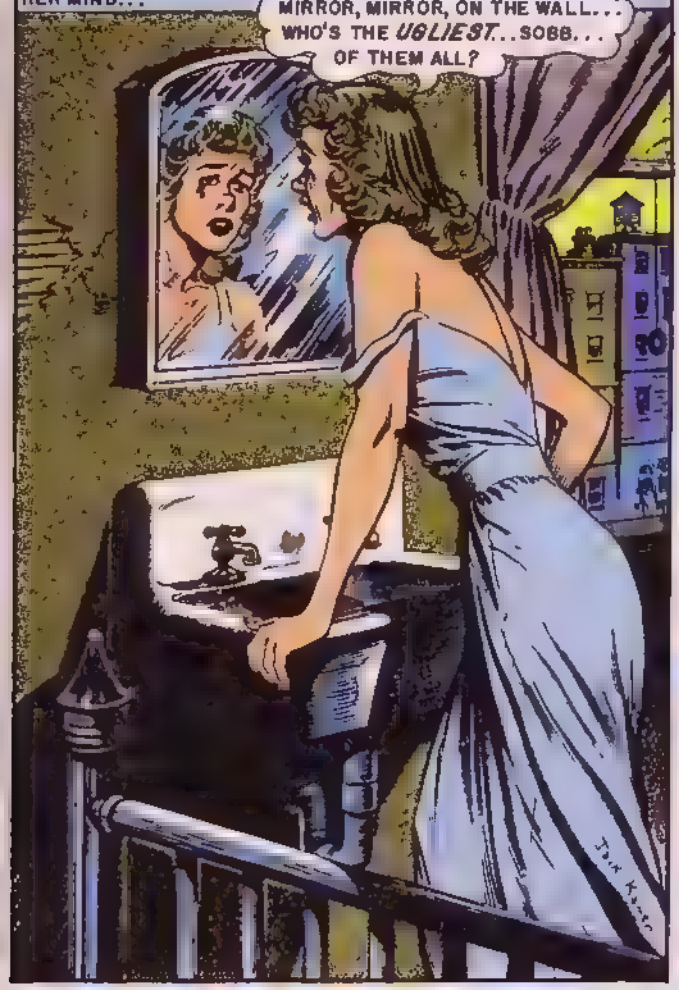
So Ted started his job at the bank the next day. . . and a week later, he and Lois were married.
THE HONEYMOON CAN WAIT, DAD! WE'RE GOING TO BUY A LITTLE HOUSE, AND. . .
HOUSE!? THAT'S GOING TO BE A BIT STEEP, TED! YOU CAN'T EXPECT TO MAKE THE DOWN-PAYMENT WITH YOUR WEEK'S SALARY FROM THE BANK. . .
I'M STILL WORKING, MR. WILER! AND I HAVE THE MONEY SAVED! WE'LL BE ABLE TO MAKE A SUBSTANTIAL DOWN-PAYMENT!
YOU'RE QUITE SOME GIRL, LOIS! YOU'LL BE GOOD FOR TED! I CAN SEE THAT. . .
And Joe remembered that, for the first time in many years, he'd been at peace with the world. . .
YOUR BOY'S WIFE DRIVING HIM TO WORK IN A NICE CAR. . . THEY OWN THEIR OWN HOME. . . AND I SAW THEM OUT AT THE COUNTRY CLUB DANCE SATURDAY. . .
WELL, IT'S A USED CAR, GEORGE, AND IT'LL BE MANY YEARS BEFORE THEY ACTUALLY OWN THEIR HOME! I USED TO WORRY ABOUT THE WAY THEY SPEND, BUT I GUESS. . . TED AND LOIS ARE PRETTY LEVEL-HEADED!
George Ryder had been the one sour note in Joe Wiler's life after Ted's marriage. . .
I NOTICE THE WAY YOU LOOK AT TED ALL THE TIME, GEORGE. . . WORRIED-LIKE! REST ASSURED THAT ANY MONEY THOSE KIDS HAVE, THEY'VE COME BY HONESTLY! TED'S ALL RIGHT, NOW. . .
IS HE? WE'LL SEE, JOE! WE'LL SEE. . .
And then, several months later, it'd happened. . .
YOU WANTED TO SEE ME?
COME IN, JOE. . . AND CLOSE THE DOOR! GENTLEMEN, THIS IS MR. WILER. . . WHOSE SON I'VE BEEN TELLING YOU ABOUT!
JOE! THESE MEN ARE STATE BANK EXAMINERS. TED'S ACCOUNTS ARE FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS SHORT!
AND. . . AND YOU THINK THAT TED. . .? OH, BUT YOU MUST BE MIS-TAKEN!
I'M SORRY, JOE! I WISH THERE WERE SOME MISTAKE! BUT THESE MEN KNOW THEIR JOBS! WHERE ARE TED AND HIS WIFE VACATIONING, JOE?
I. . . I'VE GOT TO HAVE TIME TO THINK! ONLY. . . ONLY A MINUTE, GEORGE! PLEASE!
4

AND JOE REMEMBERED HOW HE'D STARED OUT THE WINDOW OF GEORGE RYDER'S OFFICE, LOOKING OUT AT THE QUIET, PRETTY STREETS OF HIS TOWN...
IF IT WAS UP TO ME, I'D WORK SOMETHING OUT WITH YOU, JOE! BUT IT'S NOT MY MONEY! IT'S THE DEPOSITORS'! FOR ONCE IN HIS LIFE, TED'S GOT TO TAKE HIS MEDICINE...
NO! NOT TED...
JOE'D KNOWN THEN. HE'D KNOWN THAT TED WAS BAD... OR MAYBE JUST WEAK! BUT HE'D STILL LOVED TED, AND SO, HE'D TURNED HIS BACK ON THE STREETS AND THE TOWN HE LOVED...
TED DIDN'T TAKE THE MONEY! I TOOK IT! YES, I GAMBLED! I LOST A LITTLE ON THE HORSES AND I TOOK A LITTLE MORE HOPING TO WIN BACK, BUT I LOST THAT! SO I KEPT TAKING AND...
JOE! NO! DON'T SAY IT! YOU...
IT'S TRUE, GEORGE! I... I DIDN'T GAMBLE IT ALL AWAY! I STILL HAVE TWENTY-SEVEN HUNDRED DOLLARS IN MY VAULT DOWNSTAIRS! I CAN MAKE RESTITUTION TO THAT EXTENT!
JOE! JOE... I... I NEVER THOUGHT YOU'D...
JOE'D RETURNED MORE THAN HALF THE MISSING MONEY... TWENTY-SEVEN HUNDRED DOLLARS OF MONEY HE'D EARNED... HIS LIFE'S SAVINGS! HE'D BEEN ARRESTED AND BROUGHT TO TRIAL. HE'D PLEADED GUILTY...
I HAVE TAKEN MR. RYDER'S PLEA ON YOUR BEHALF INTO CONSIDERATION! THEREFORE, I SENTENCE YOU, JOSEPH WILER, TO TEN YEARS IN THE STATE PENITENTIARY...
TEN... YEARS!
JOE REMEMBERED HOW HE'D SWAYED... HOW HIS FRIEND GEORGE HAD GRABBED HIM... HOW HE'D SEEN THE TEARS IN GEORGE'S EYES...
I'LL... I'LL DO EVERYTHING I CAN TO... TO HAVE THIS TERRIBLE SENTENCE CHANGED! I'LL KEEP MY LAWYERS WORKING FOR YOU, JOE!
TEN YEARS!? I... I NEVER THOUGHT OF MYSELF AS OLD BEFORE! TEN YEARS WILL BE TAKEN OUT OF MY LIFE! I'LL BE... AN OLD MAN.
SO JOE WILER HAD DONE THE ULTIMATE FOR HIS SON, HE'D SACRIFICED HIMSELF ON THE ALTER OF PATERNAL DEVOTION. HE'D FELT VERY NOBLE...
DAD, WHY DIDN'T YOU CALL? WHY DIDN'T YOU WRITE? I DIDN'T FIND OUT TILL WE GOT BACK TODAY!
IT'S BETTER THIS WAY, SON! YOUR NAME HAS BEEN KEPT CLEAN! MR. RYDER ISN'T HOLDING THIS AGAINST YOU! NOW, KEEP YOUR NAME CLEAN!
DAD, I JUST CAN'T BELIEVE THAT YOU DID IT! TEN YEARS...
MY LIFE IS FINISHED, TED! YOURS AND LOIS'S ARE JUST BEGINNING! YOU CAN MAKE GOOD IF YOU DO THE RIGHT THINGS! I CAN'T HELP YOU ANYMORE! GO NOW... AND GOD BLESS YOU!
5

AND SO, NOW, WITH TWO YEARS OFF FOR GOOD BEHAVIOR, JOE WILER WAS ON HIS WAY HOME. BUT HE NO LONGER FELT NOBLE... ONLY TIRED... AND VERY OLD...
I'LL NEVER FORGET YOUR MANY KINDNESSES WHILE I WAS UP THERE, GEORGE... YOUR CONSTANT EFFORTS TO GET ME OUT... THE FOOD BASKETS... ALL THE TIMES YOU VISITED ME!
IT... IT WAS THE LEAST I COULD DO, JOE! AND JUST REMEMBER THAT THERE'S A JOB WAITING WHENEVER YOU WANT TO START!
THERE WAS A JOYOUS AND TEARFUL REUNION AT THE WILER HOME LATER THAT DAY...
THIS IS JOSEPH, DAD. HE'S SEVEN! WE NAMED HIM AFTER YOU! AND THIS IS TED JUNIOR! HE'S FIVE...
IT'S GOOD TO HAVE YOU HOME, MR. WILER! YOU'LL STAY WITH US! WE BOTH WANT YOU TO...
IT WAS GRATIFYING... IN A WAY. TED AND LOIS WERE SHOWING THEIR APPRECIATION FOR JOE'S SACRIFICE. AND GEORGE RYDER WAS AFFORDING HIM THE DIGNITY OF A JOB. WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD IT WAS AFTER ALL! BUT THAT NIGHT...
DR. WILLACE! DAD AND I RUSHED OVER AS SOON AS WE GOT YOUR MESSAGE! WHAT'S WRONG?
IT'S MR. RYDER! HE'S HAD A HEART ATTACK! IT'S JUST A MATTER OF MINUTES! HE'S DYING, AND HE KNOWS IT! HE INSISTED UPON SEEING YOU BOTH...
JOE WILER COULD HARDLY HOLD BACK THE TEARS AS HE TOOK THE HAND OF HIS DYING FRIEND...
GEORGE, YOU... CHOKE... YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT! WHY, THE BANK... IT JUST WOULDN'T BE THE SAME...
YOU'VE... GOT... TO... HEAR... ME, JOE! THAT... THAT MONEY! THAT... FIVE THOUSAND... DOLLARS! I... I WAS ON A SPOT... DEEP IN DEBT... PLAYING THE MARKET... LOSING STEADILY! I... GASP... I STOLE THAT MONEY, JOE!
IT TOOK SOME TIME FOR GEORGE RYDER'S WORDS TO SINK IN. TED WAS THE FIRST TO UNDERSTAND...
YOU STOLE THAT MONEY!? BUT WHY DID MY FATHER CONFESS? WHY DID HE GO TO PRISON IN YOUR PLACE?
I... TRIED... EVERYTHING... TO SAVE HIM... EVERYTHING BUT CONFESSING MYSELF! I... COULDN'T... FACE THE DISGRACE.
JOE WILER TURNED SLOWLY TO HIS SON...
TED! YOU... YOU DIDN'T STEAL THAT MONEY!? I THOUGHT... THEN ALL MY SACRIFICING... CHOKE... IT WAS FOR NOTHING!
I DIDN'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THE MONEY, DAD! LOIS WAS WORKING! WE WERE DOING ALL RIGHT! I... THOUGHT... YOU...
THEN JOE WILER GRABBED GEORGE RYDER BY THE SHOULDERS WITH THE GRIP OF A MADMAN AND SHOOK HIM VIOLENTLY. AND EVEN TED COULD NOT TEAR HIM AWAY...
YOU CHEAT! THAT'S WHY YOU WERE SO GOOD TO ME... TRYING TO BUY THE EIGHT YEARS OF MY LIFE YOU STOLE! YOU CHEAT! CHEAT! CHEAT!
DAD! DAD! THAT'S NO GOOD NOW! HE'S DEAD! DAD...
THE END

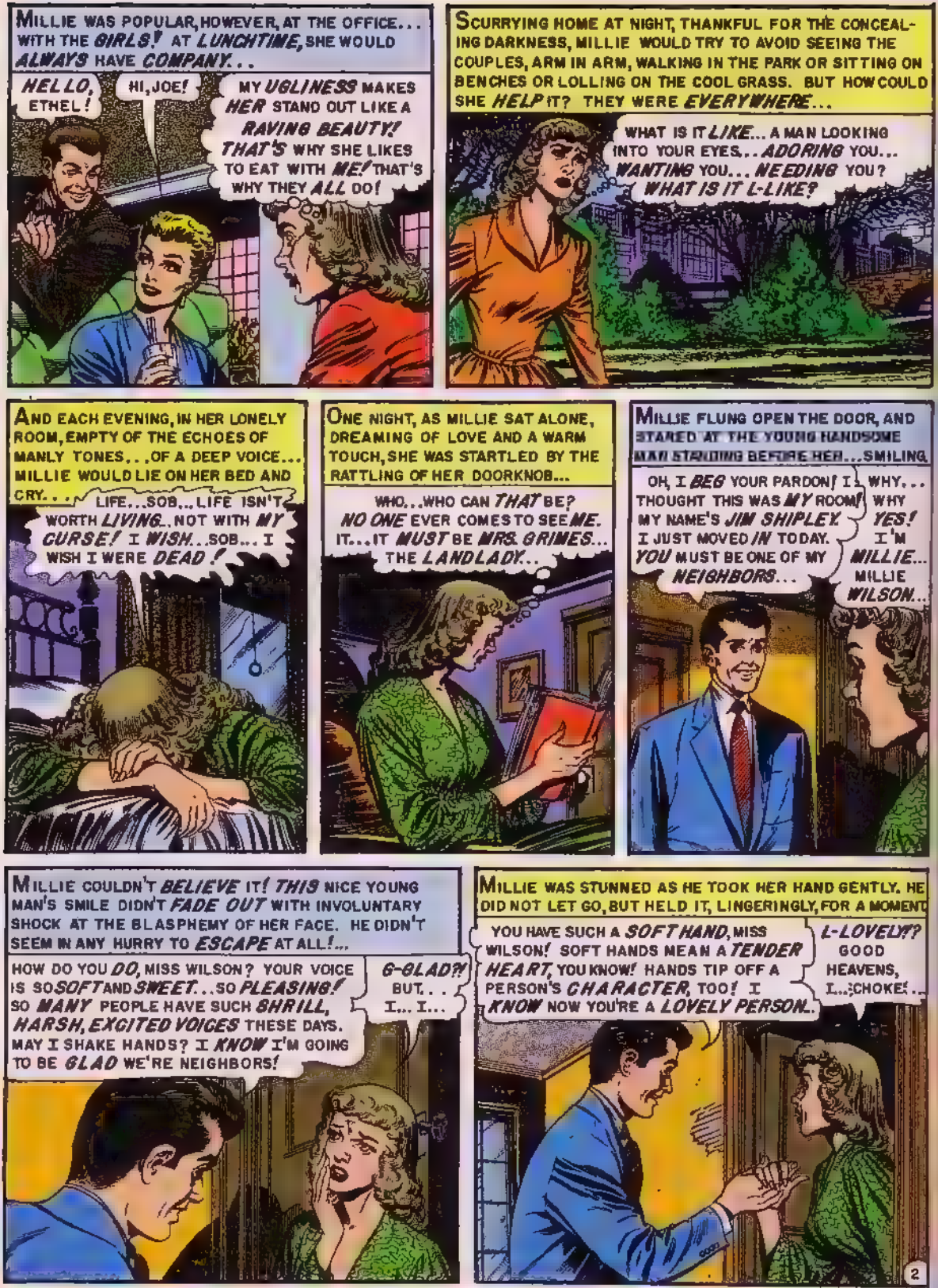
TOTALLY BLIND

EVERY MORNING WAS THE BEGINNING OF A PAINFUL ORDEAL FOR MILDRED WILSON. IT WASN'T THE CRUEL ALARM, JANGLING HER FROM HER LONELY FITFUL SLEEP. IT WASN'T THE TARNISHED, COLD-WATER FLAT WITH ITS SOILED WALL PAPER AND ITS MUSTY SMELL AND ITS COLD, HOLLOW, EMPTY ECHOES. THESE THINGS MILLIE COULD GRIN AT WRYLY. SHE COULD ACCEPT THE POVERTY AND DRABNESS AND WRETCHEDNESS OF HER LIFE. THE PAINFUL THING...THE ORDEAL SHE HATED FOR THE TRUE MISERY IT BROUGHT...WAS WHEN SHE CLIMBED FROM HER LUMPY BED AND STOOD OVER THE RUST-STAINED SINK AND HAD TO GAZE INTO THE MEDICINE CABINET MIRROR. SHE DREADED THE FAMILIAR CHANT THAT ALWAYS DANCED MOCKINGLY THROUGH HER MIND...



AND THE ORDEAL WOULD CONTINUE AS MILLIE WALKED TO WORK, PAST MEN...YOUNG AND OLD... WHO, AFTER JUST ONE LOOK, WOULD JERK AWAY AS IF THEY HAD BEEN SLAPPED IN THE FACE...

SOMETIMES, MILLIE WOULD HEAR A LOW, UNABASHED, WOLF WHISTLE BEHIND HER, COMMENTING ON HER TRIM FIGURE. THIS WAS THE WORST ORDEAL OF ALL...WHEN THE EAGER YOUNG MAN WOULD CATCH UP AND...


MILLIE WAS POPULAR, HOWEVER, AT THE OFFICE... WITH THE GIRLS! AT LUNCHTIME, SHE WOULD ALWAYS HAVE COMPANY...
HELLO, ETHEL!
HI, JOE!
MY UGLINESS MAKES HER STAND OUT LIKE A RAVING BEAUTY! THAT'S WHY SHE LIKES TO EAT WITH ME! THAT'S WHY THEY ALL DO!
SCURRYING HOME AT NIGHT, THANKFUL FOR THE CONCEALING DARKNESS, MILLIE WOULD TRY TO AVOID SEEING THE COUPLES, ARM IN ARM, WALKING IN THE PARK OR SITTING ON BENCHES OR LOLLING ON THE COOL GRASS. BUT HOW COULD SHE HELP IT? THEY WERE EVERYWHERE...
WHAT IS IT LIKE... A MAN LOOKING INTO YOUR EYES... ADORING YOU... WANTING YOU... NEEDING YOU? WHAT IS IT L-LIKE?
AND EACH EVENING, IN HER LONELY ROOM, EMPTY OF THE ECHOES OF MANLY TONES... OF A DEEP VOICE... MILLIE WOULD LIE ON HER BED AND CRY...
LIFE... SOB... LIFE ISN'T WORTH LIVING... NOT WITH MY CURSE! I WISH... SOB... I WISH I WERE DEAD!
ONE NIGHT, AS MILLIE SAT ALONE, DREAMING OF LOVE AND A WARM TOUCH, SHE WAS STARTLED BY THE RATTLING OF HER DOORKNOB...
WHO... WHO CAN THAT BE? NO ONE EVER COMES TO SEE ME. IT... IT MUST BE MRS. GRIMES... THE LANDLADY...
MILLIE FLUNG OPEN THE DOOR, AND STARED AT THE YOUNG HANDSOME MAN STANDING BEFORE HER... SMILING.
OH, I BEG YOUR PARDON! I THOUGHT THIS WAS MY ROOM! MY NAME'S JIM SHIPLEY. I JUST MOVED IN TODAY. YOU MUST BE ONE OF MY NEIGHBORS...
WHY... WHY YES! I'M MILLIE... MILLIE WILSON...
MILLIE COULDN'T BELIEVE IT! THIS NICE YOUNG MAN'S SMILE DIDN'T FADE OUT WITH INVOLUNTARY SHOCK AT THE BLASPHEMY OF HER FACE. HE DIDN'T SEEM IN ANY HURRY TO ESCAPE AT ALL!...
HOW DO YOU DO, MISS WILSON? YOUR VOICE IS SO SOFT AND SWEET... SO PLEASING! SO MANY PEOPLE HAVE SUCH SHRILL, HARSH, EXCITED VOICES THESE DAYS. MAY I SHAKE HANDS? I KNOW I'M GOING TO BE GLAD WE'RE NEIGHBORS!
G-GLAD?! BUT... I... I...
MILLIE WAS STUNNED AS HE TOOK HER HAND GENTLY. HE DID NOT LET GO, BUT HELD IT, LINGERINGLY, FOR A MOMENT
YOU HAVE SUCH A SOFT HAND, MISS WILSON! SOFT HANDS MEAN A TENDER HEART, YOU KNOW! HANDS TIP OFF A PERSON'S CHARACTER, TOO! I KNOW NOW YOU'RE A LOVELY PERSON...
L-LOVELY!? GOOD HEAVENS, I... CHOKE!...
2

MILLIE COULDN'T BELIEVE HER *EARS!* HE *LOOKED* PERFECTLY SANE... NORMAL! YET HE WASN'T *MOCKING* HER. SHE THRILLED, PERMITTING A WARM GLOW TO STEAL THROUGH HER, AT HIS APPARENT UTTER SINCERITY. THE *FIRST TIME*... THE FIRST TIME IN HER *LIFE* THAT SHE'D EVER HEARD SUCH WORDS FROM A MAN...

I'M *SO* GLAD I *MADE* THIS MISTAKE, MISS WILSON! I WAS *LOOKING* FOR *509*...

THIS IS *307!* YOU'RE JUST DOWN THE *HALL!*

HE TURNED AWAY AND FOR THE FIRST TIME, SHE NOTICED HIS WHITE CANE...

THANK YOU! IT'S A LITTLE *CONFUSING* THE FIRST DAY. I WON'T HAVE ANY *TROUBLE* ONCE I LEARN THE *EXACT DISTANCES!* GOOD NIGHT, AND I *HOPE* WE'LL BECOME *GOOD FRIENDS*, MISS WILSON..

I...I... CHOKE... I'M *SURE* WE WILL!

SHE WATCHED HIM TAP HIS WAY DOWN THE HALL TO HIS ROOM AND IT ALL FELL NEATLY IN PLACE WITH A HEARTBREAKING CRUSHING THUD AS SHE CLOSED THE DOOR...

BLIND! HE'S... SOB... *BLIND!* *THAT'S* WHY HE DIDN'T *JERK BACK IN REVULSION!* HE TOLD ME I HAD A *SWEET VOICE*... *SOFT HANDS*... AND KEPT *SMILING* ALL THE WHILE... BECAUSE HE *DIDN'T SEE MY FACE!* SOBBB...

MILLIE RAN THEN TO THE MIRROR... THE TEARS STREAMING FROM HER EYES. AND SHE LAUGHED AS SHE CRIED... AN HYSTERICAL KIND OF LAUGHTER...

HEH... I'VE GOT A *FRIEND*, FINALLY... HEH, HEH! A *MAN WITHOUT EYES TO SEE MY UGLY FACE*... HEH, HEH! A *BLIND* MAN COULD *WANT* TO BE MY FRIEND! EH, EH! IT'S... IT'S SO *FUNNY!* SO... EH, EH, EH... *SO FUNNY! SOBBBBB...*

MILLIE MADE UP HER MIND... AND WHEN BLIND JIM SHIPLEY KNOCKED ON HER DOOR THE NEXT EVENING...

PLEASE, MISS WILSON, DON'T THINK I'M *FORCING* MY *ATTENTIONS* ON YOU... BUT WOULD YOU LIKE TO TAKE A *WALK* WITH ME?

I'VE GOT TO *TELL* HIM! I *CAN'T TAKE ADVANTAGE* OF HIS *BLINDNESS!* I'VE GOT TO TELL HIM THE *TRUTH*... THAT I'M *UGLY*... UGLY AS *SIN!* I...I...

BUT MILLIE *DIDN'T* TELL HIM. SHE *COULDN'T*, NOT AT THAT *MOMENT*. SHE *WANTED* TO TAKE THAT WALK WITH JIM! SHE *WANTED* TO ENJOY THE ILLUSION... JUST A *BIT MORE!*...

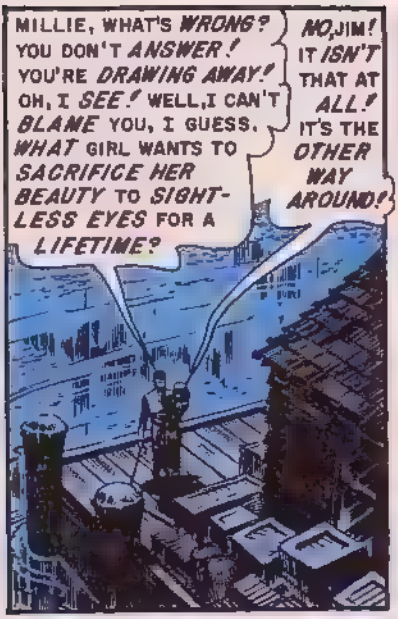
I'D LIKE TO *KNOW* YOU BETTER, MILLIE... IF I MAY *CALL* YOU MILLIE... SO I'LL *START* BY TELLING YOU ABOUT *ME!* I'M A WORLD WAR II VET. I WAS HIT AT NORMANDY... BLINDED. I DON'T *MIND* SO MUCH... *NOW!* THERE'S *STILL* BEAUTY FOR ME TO ENJOY... LIKE *YOUR VOICE*... WHICH TELLS ME THAT *YOU* ARE *BEAUTIFUL!*

OH, *JIM*... CHOKE... I *MUST* TELL YOU! I *MUST*...

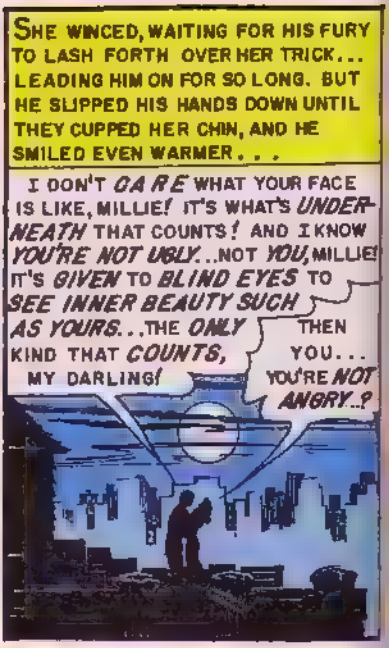
BUT *AGAIN* MILLIE COULDN'T BRING HERSELF TO SMASH THIS DELICIOUS DREAM. INSTEAD, SHE *CLUNG* TO HIS WARM, UNKNOWING, UNSEEING FRIENDSHIP... ALWAYS *PUTTING OFF* TELLING HIM JUST A *LITTLE LONGER*... UNTIL, ONE DAY...

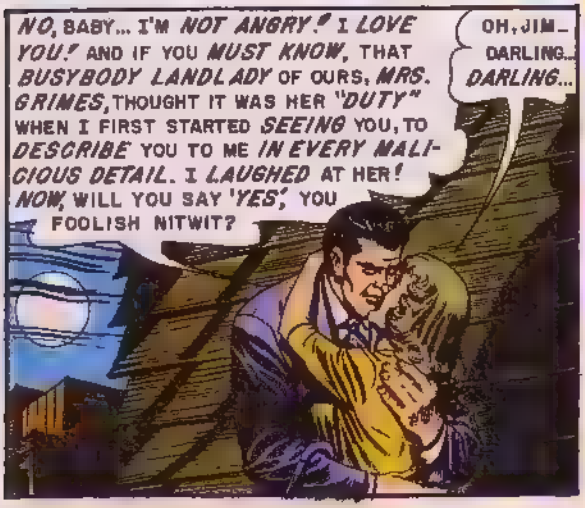
MILLIE, DEAR... *I'M LONELY*... AND I FEEL *YOU ARE TOO!* WE WOULDN'T *BE* LONELY AS *MAN AND WIFE!* MILLIE... DARLING... *MARRY ME?*

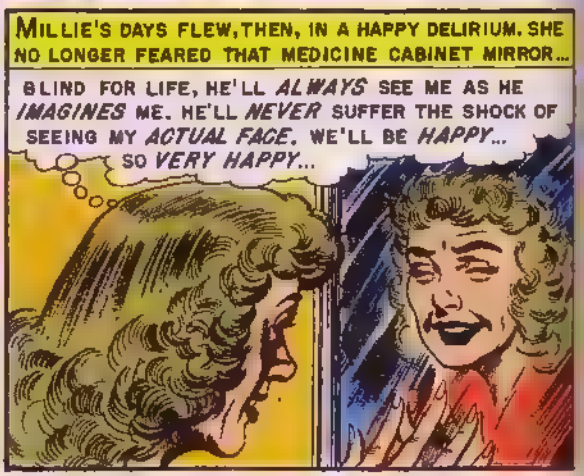
OH, NO! *NO!* I...I *COULDN'T!* I COULDN'T *DO* THAT TO HIM!

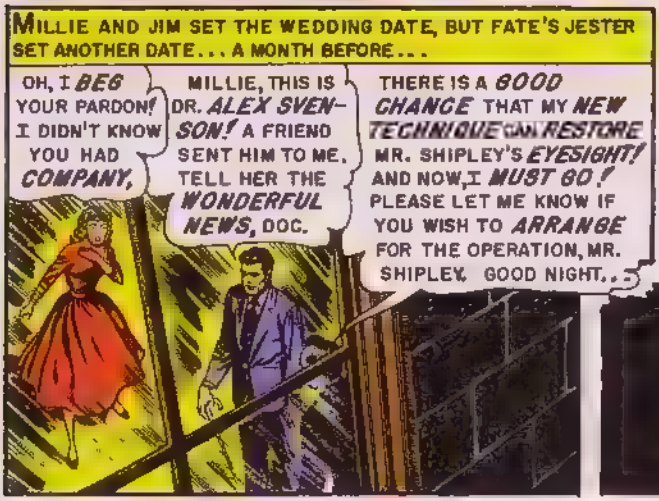

MILLIE, WHAT'S WRONG? YOU DON'T ANSWER! YOU'RE DRAWING AWAY! OH, I SEE! WELL, I CAN'T BLAME YOU, I GUESS. WHAT GIRL WANTS TO SACRIFICE HER BEAUTY TO SIGHTLESS EYES FOR A LIFETIME?
NO, JIM! IT ISN'T THAT AT ALL! IT'S THE OTHER WAY AROUND!

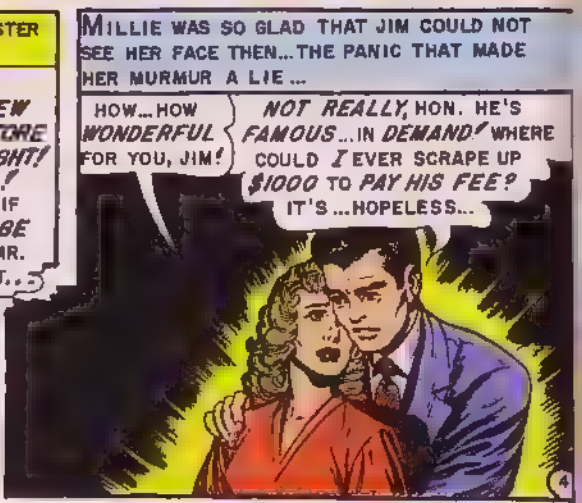
AND NOW MILLIE PAID FOR HER BRIEF, SHAM HAPPINESS... PAID DEARLY IN THE COIN OF AGONY... EACH WORD WRENCHED OUT LIKE A BIT OF HER SICK, SAD HEART...
FEEL MY FACE, JIM... EVERY UGLY LINE OF IT! NOW YOU KNOW WHY I CAN'T MARRY YOU! IT'S... SOB... IT'S FOR YOUR SAKE...


SHE WINCED, WAITING FOR HIS FURY TO LASH FORTH OVER HER TRICK... LEADING HIM ON FOR SO LONG. BUT HE SLIPPED HIS HANDS DOWN UNTIL THEY CUPPED HER CHIN, AND HE SMILED EVEN WARMER...
I DON'T CARE WHAT YOUR FACE IS LIKE, MILLIE! IT'S WHAT'S UNDERNEATH THAT COUNTS! AND I KNOW YOU'RE NOT UGLY... NOT YOU, MILLIE! IT'S GIVEN TO BLIND EYES TO SEE INNER BEAUTY SUCH AS YOURS... THE ONLY KIND THAT COUNTS, MY DARLING!
THEN YOU... YOU'RE NOT ANGRY...?


NO, BABY... I'M NOT ANGRY! I LOVE YOU! AND IF YOU MUST KNOW, THAT BUSYBODY LANDLADY OF OURS, MRS. GRIMES, THOUGHT IT WAS HER "DUTY" WHEN I FIRST STARTED SEEING YOU, TO DESCRIBE YOU TO ME IN EVERY MALICIOUS DETAIL. I LAUGHED AT HER! NOW, WILL YOU SAY 'YES', YOU FOOLISH NITWIT?
OH, JIM— DARLING... DARLING...


MILLIE'S DAYS FLEW, THEN, IN A HAPPY DELIRIUM. SHE NO LONGER FEARED THAT MEDICINE CABINET MIRROR...
BLIND FOR LIFE, HE'LL ALWAYS SEE ME AS HE IMAGINES ME. HE'LL NEVER SUFFER THE SHOCK OF SEEING MY ACTUAL FACE. WE'LL BE HAPPY... SO VERY HAPPY...


MILLIE AND JIM SET THE WEDDING DATE, BUT FATE'S JESTER SET ANOTHER DATE... A MONTH BEFORE...
OH, I BEG YOUR PARDON! I DIDN'T KNOW YOU HAD COMPANY,
MILLIE, THIS IS DR. ALEX SVENSON! A FRIEND SENT HIM TO ME. TELL HER THE WONDERFUL NEWS, DOC.
THERE IS A GOOD CHANCE THAT MY NEW TECHNIQUE CAN RESTORE MR. SHIPLEY'S EYESIGHT! AND NOW, I MUST GO! PLEASE LET ME KNOW IF YOU WISH TO ARRANGE FOR THE OPERATION, MR. SHIPLEY. GOOD NIGHT...


MILLIE WAS SO GLAD THAT JIM COULD NOT SEE HER FACE THEN... THE PANIC THAT MADE HER MURMUR A LIE...
HOW... HOW WONDERFUL FOR YOU, JIM!
NOT REALLY, HON. HE'S FAMOUS... IN DEMAND! WHERE COULD I EVER SCRAPE UP $1000 TO PAY HIS FEE? IT'S... HOPELESS...

MILLIE SLEPT ON A TORTURE RACK ALL THAT NIGHT AS THE GRIM DECISION HUNG BEFORE HER...

$1000 WILL GIVE *JIM* HIS *SIGHT BACK*... AND *LOSE HIM* FOR *ME!* *INNER BEAUTY?!* HE WON'T REMEMBER *THAT* AT *ALL* WHEN HE SEES MY *FACE* FOR THE FIRST TIME! LET JIM *SEE*... AND *LOSE HIM*... OR *KEEP HIM BLIND*... AND *HOLD HIM?* *WHICH?* OH, GOD, HOW CAN I *CHOOSE!*

BY MORNING, MILLIE'S MIRROR REFLECTED HER SUFFERING... AND THE STRANGE INNER PEACE SHE'D FOUND ALONG WITH IT..

I *LOVE* HIM! WHAT *OTHER* ANSWER IS THERE? I'LL *RAISE* THE MONEY *SOMEHOW*... WITHDRAW MY *SAVINGS*... SKIP *LUNCHES*... SAVE *PENNIES*... *SKRIMP* AND *SCRATCH*! I *MUST!* I *LOVE HIM!*

AND SO, ANOTHER KIND OF ORDEAL BEGAN FOR MILLIE...

MY EYES... THIS *TYPING* AT *NIGHT!* BUT I'D GO BLIND *MYSELF* TO SAVE *JIM'S* EYES. HOPE HE DOESN'T *HEAR*, THOUGH, THAT I WORK *HALF THROUGH EACH NIGHT!*

MOM'S DIAMOND RING... GIVEN TO ME BEFORE SHE *DIED*. WELL, *I* WON'T NEED IT *NOW*... AND IT OUGHT TO BRING THE *BALANCE* THAT I NEED!

FINALLY, WITH THE $1000 SHE'D SAVED, MILLIE WENT TO SEE DR. SVENSON AND MADE ARRANGEMENTS FOR JIM'S OPERATION. THEN SHE RUSHED HOME TO TELL HIM THE NEWS...

WELL, IT'S ALL SET, DARLING! I MADE AN APPOINTMENT FOR... *JIM!* *LOOK OUT! THE STAIRS! JIM!*

JIM HAD FORGOTTEN HIS CANE. HE TUMBLED HEADLONG DOWN THE ROOMING HOUSE STAIRS, LANDING AT MILLIE'S FEET. SHE CRADLED HIM IN HER ARMS...

DARLING... SOB... ARE YOU *ALL RIGHT?* ANY *PAIN*. *BROKEN BONES?*

N-NO! I'M *OKAY!* JUST *BRUISED* A BIT! MY *HEAD* AND... AND... I'M JUST A LITTLE *DIZZY*, THAT'S ALL!

SHE HELPED HIM TO HIS FEET AND GUIDED HIM BACK UP THE STAIRS TO HIS ROOM. HE ACTED STRANGELY, AS IF DAZED AND SHAKEN...

I'M *SORRY* I *STARTLED* YOU LIKE THAT, DEAR. I WAS *SO EXCITED!* I... I'D *MADE ARRANGEMENTS* WITH *DR. SVENSON* FOR THE *OPERATION!* I *SAVED THE MONEY!*

OPERATION? *HUH?* YOU *SAVED* THE *MONEY?* I... I... *TH-THANKS*, DEAR! I *APPRECIATE* IT!

THE NEXT DAY, JIM ACTED EVEN MORE STRANGELY...

DEAR, WHY NOT *GET MARRIED FIRST*... *THEN* THE OPERATION? I DON'T WANT TO *DELAY* OUR HAPPINESS EVEN *ONE DAY!*

NO, JIM! YOU *MUST* HAVE THE OPERATION *FIRST*. IT'S... IT'S *MORE IMPORTANT!*

IT WAS THEIR FIRST QUARREL. HE PERSISTED AND SHE PERSISTED...

BUT WHAT *DIFFERENCE* DOES IT MAKE, MILLIE? *WHY* IS IT *MORE IMPORTANT?*

ALL RIGHT, JIM! I'LL HAVE TO *GIVE IT TO YOU STRAIGHT!* I... I WANT YOU TO *REMEMBER ME* THE WAY YOU *ENVISIONED ME!* SOB!

YOU SEE, WHEN THEY TAKE THE *BANDAGES* OFF, I'LL... I'LL BE... SOB... *GONE*... *OUT OF YOUR LIFE*... *FOREVER! I COULDN'T STAND* TO SEE THE *LOATHING* AND *REVULSION* IN YOUR FACE WHEN YOU *FIRST SEE* MY *TRUE UGLINESS!* SOBB... NOW LET ME *GO*... LET ME BE *ALONE*... SOB...

SHE FLED THEN, SEEKING THE SAFETY OF THE CALLOUS CROWDS IN THE MORNING STREET. BUT FEET POUNDED BEHIND HER. AND FINALLY STRONG ARMS SEIZED HER...

YOU *LITTLE FOOL!* NOW *I'LL* GIVE IT TO *YOU* STRAIGHT! I SAW *DR. SVENSON* BEFORE AND *CANCELLED THE OPERATION!* I GOT YOUR *MONEY* BACK!

YOU... YOU MEAN YOU'D *STAY BLIND*... FOR *ME*...?

LISTEN TO ME, MILLIE! I WAS *GOING* TO KEEP IT A *SECRET* TILL OUR *HONEYMOON* SO YOU WOULDN'T THINK I *MARRIED* YOU OUT OF *PITY!* THAT *FALL* YESTERDAY... IT *DID* SOMETHING... *RELIEVED* SOME *PRESSURE* ON THE *OPTIC NERVES*...

JIM! YOU... YOU RAN *AFTER* ME... THROUGH THE *CROWD!* *YOU CAN SEE!*

SHE COVERED HER FACE IN HER HANDS AND HE WAS VERY GENTLE...

YOU CAN SEE MY FACE! OH, LORD...

DON'T HIDE IT, MILLIE. I *FIRST* SAW IT *YESTERDAY*, AT THE BOTTOM OF THE *STAIRS*, SHINING WITH *LOVE* AND *TENDERNESS* AND *UNSELFISHNESS*...

AND HE TOOK HER HANDS AWAY, AND KISSED HER TEAR-STAINED CHEEK...

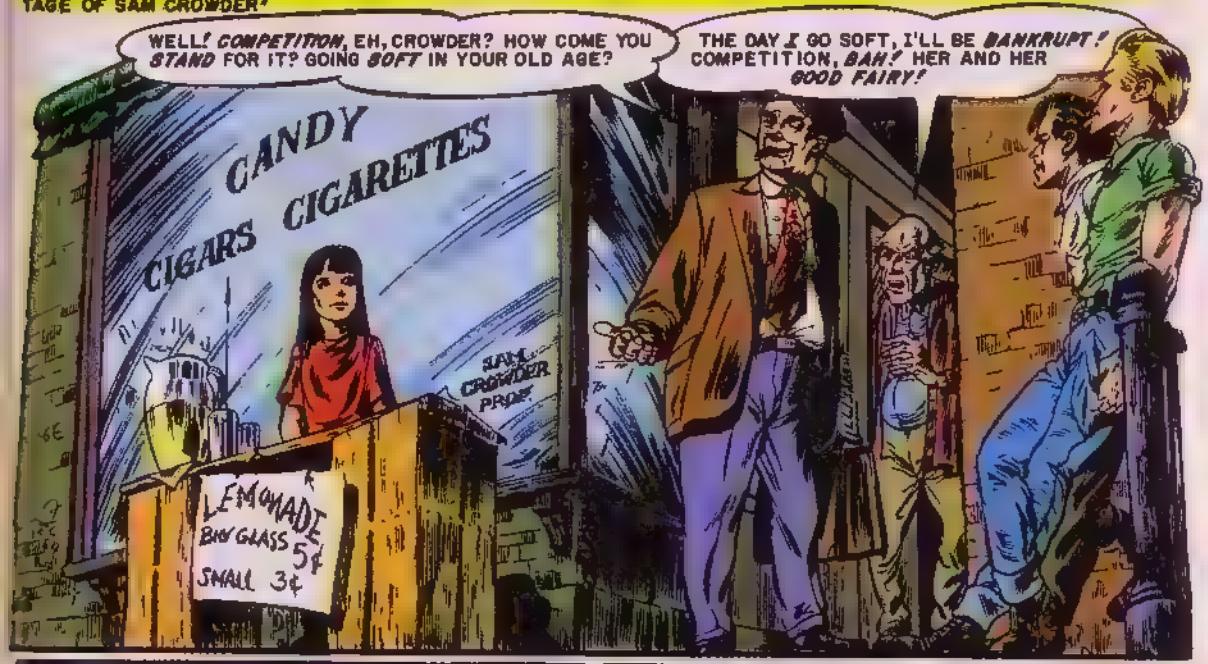
IT'S A *BEAUTIFUL* FACE, MILLIE, BECAUSE *I LOVE YOU* AND *I SEE ITS BEAUTY!* IT REFLECTS THE BEAUTY THAT IS *INSIDE* YOU! SO *DON'T COVER IT UP!* I WANT TO *LOOK AT IT... ALWAYS!*

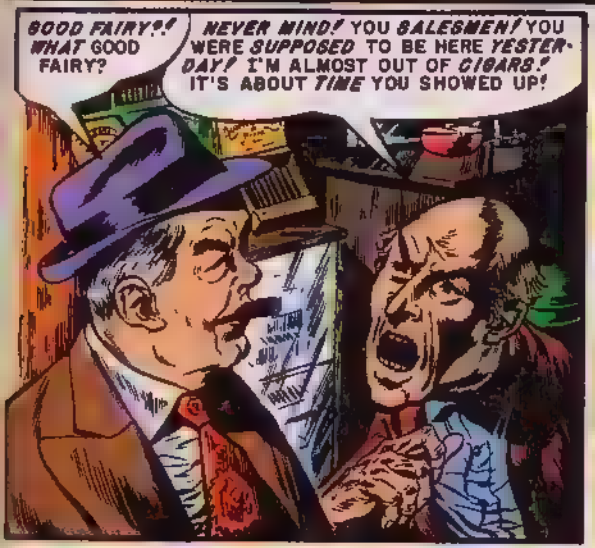
OH, JIM! *JIM!* I WAS THE ONE THAT WAS *REALLY BLIND!*

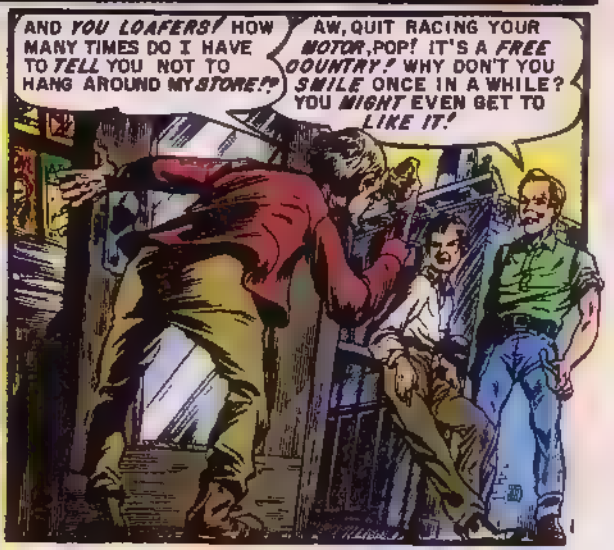
THE END

THE GOOD FAIRY

"CUTE!" THAT WAS WHAT HARRIS, THE TOBACCO SALESMAN, CALLED THE DIRTY-FACED KID. CUTE! THE FOOL! A LOT HE KNEW, AND SAM KNEW WHAT HARRIS WAS THINKING, IN HARRIS'S EYES, AND A LOT OF OTHERS, SAM CROWDER WAS A MEAN, PENNY-PINCHING OLD CRAB. AS IF SAM CARED WHAT THEY ALL THOUGHT! IN THE SLUMS, YOU PINCH PENNIES OR YOU STARVE! SO SAM WAS A MEAN OLD CRAB. HE EARNED A LIVING, DIDN'T HE? NOBODY TOOK ADVANTAGE OF SAM CROWDER!


WELL! COMPETITION, EH, CROWDER? HOW COME YOU STAND FOR IT? GOING SOFT IN YOUR OLD AGE?
THE DAY I GO SOFT, I'LL BE BANKRUPT! COMPETITION, BAH! HER AND HER GOOD FAIRY!
CANDY
CIGARS CIGARETTES
SAM CROWDER PROP
LEMONADE
BIG GLASS 5¢
SMALL 3¢


GOOD FAIRY?! WHAT GOOD FAIRY?
NEVER MIND! YOU SALESMEN! YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE HERE YESTERDAY! I'M ALMOST OUT OF CIGARS! IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU SHOWED UP!


AND YOU LOAFERS! HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU NOT TO HANG AROUND MY STORE?!
AW, QUIT RACING YOUR MOTOR, POP! IT'S A FREE COUNTRY! WHY DON'T YOU SMILE ONCE IN A WHILE? YOU MIGHT EVEN GET TO LIKE IT!

I'LL TAKE A GLASS OF LEMONADE, ANNIE! MAKE IT A BIG ONE!
HMMPH...
THE COMPETITION SEEMS TO DO ALL RIGHT, CROWDER! I CAN UNDERSTAND WHY YOU'RE SORE! BUT AFTER ALL, A LITTLE GIRL...
SO WHAT IF SHE'S A LITTLE GIRL! YOU'RE JUST LIKE ALL THE REST! YOU NEVER THINK THAT I'VE GOT TO LIVE, TOO!
SAY! YOU REALLY ARE SORE! IF SHE'S CUTTING IN ON YOUR SODA FOUNTAIN BUSINESS THAT MUCH, HOW COME YOU HAVEN'T GOTTEN RID OF HER?
HOW COME!? DON'T YOU THINK I'VE TRIED!? I PAY TAXES! BUT DO I GET PROTECTION? NOT ME! A DIRTY-FACED KID COMES ALONG AND EVERYBODY GOES SOFT AS MUSH!
BUT THE POLICE...
THE POLICE!? YOU THINK THAT'S THE ANSWER, EH? WELL LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT THE POLICE! THEY'RE ON HER SIDE! THEY HAVE BEEN... RIGHT FROM THE START!
THE POLICE! HAH! HARRIS WAS SO SMART, MAYBE HE COULD FIGURE IT OUT. SO SAM TOLD HIM THE WHOLE STORY.. RIGHT FROM THAT MORNING TWO WEEKS BACK WHEN HE'D COME TO OPEN HIS STORE... AND THERE SHE'D BEEN..
WHAT THE...?
YOU... WHO TOLD YOU YOU COULD SELL LEMONADE HERE?
DOES SOMEBODY HAVE TO TELL HER, CROWDER? RELAX! YOU DON'T HAVE TO SCARE THE KID HALF TO DEATH! OR .. DO YOU ENJOY BEING MEAN?
SEE? RIGHT OFF, SAM'D BEEN IN THE WRONG! SAM HAD A REPUTATION FOR BEING MEAN! WITHOUT IT, THE WHOLE NEIGHBORHOOD MIGHT TAKE ADVANTAGE OF HIM. BUT THAT MADE NO NEVER MIND...
PLEASE! I...I DIDN'T KNOW I WAS DOING ANYTHING WRONG...

I...I WON'T *BOTHER* ANYBODY! I...I JUST WANT TO EARN SOME *MONEY!* IT'S FOR *MOM!* SHE... SHE'S NOT *FEELING* SO GOOD... AND WE...WE HAVEN'T HAD MUCH *MONEY* SINCE DADDY DIED...

WELL, CROWDER? DO YOU WANT ME TO *RUN HER OFF?* YOU'RE WITHIN YOUR *RIGHTS* IF YOU DO! JUST SAY THE *WORD!* OR DO YOU THINK IT WOULD BE A GOOD IDEA TO ACT *HUMAN*...JUST *ONCE*...?

AS IF SAM HADN'T KNOWN WHAT MURPHY'D *REALLY* MEANT. A COP COULD MAKE PLENTY TROUBLE FOR YOU IF HE WANTED TO. BUT *THAT* WASN'T WHY SAM TURNED AWAY...

DID I *ASK* YOU?

P-PLEASE, MISTER... I...I CAN SEE THAT YOU'RE *MAD!* I DIDN'T *MEAN* TO MAKE YOU MAD...

THE WAY THEY *GRINNED* AT SAM. IT WASN'T THAT THEY *CARED* ABOUT THE DIRTY KID! SAM *KNEW* THEM! THEY JUST DIDN'T LIKE *HIM!* THAT WAS *WHY* SAM HAD WALKED AWAY. YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN THEM WHEN SAM HAD GONE INSIDE...

I'LL TAKE A *BIG GLASS,* LITTLE GIRL!

MAKE THAT *TWO* BIG GLASSES, KID!

THE KID...HER NAME WAS ANNIE...DID QUITE A BUSINESS! THEY BOUGHT FROM HER JUST TO *SPITE* SAM. AND MURPHY, THE COP...YOU'D HAVE THOUGHT HE WAS *PART OWNER* OF THAT STAND, LATER...

CIGARS

HE CHECKED ON THAT STAND LIKE IT WAS A *BANK!* AND NEXT MORNING, WHEN THAT "GOOD FAIRY" BUSINESS CAME UP, HE ACTED AS IF HE'D REALLY *BELIEVED* IT...

MISTER MURPHY! MISTER MURPHY...*LOOK!*

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? WHAT'S ALL THE EXCITEMENT? WHAT ARE YOU TWO TRYING TO DO, RUIN MY BUSINESS COMPLETELY?
SIMMER DOWN, CROWDER! NOBODY'S TRYING TO HURT YOU!
CIGARETTES CANDY
MISTER CROWDER... LOOK! MY LEMONADE JAR! IT'S... IT'S FULL!
SO IT'S FULL! SO WHAT!?
SO IT WASN'T FULL LAST NIGHT! ANNIE BROUGHT SOME MORE LEMONADE WITH HER, BUT, SHE DOESN'T NEED IT! THE WAY SHE FIGURES, A GOOD FAIRY CAME LAST NIGHT AND FILLED THE JAR FOR HER!
A... WHAT!?
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT, SO IT HADN'T BEEN THE RIGHT THING TO SAY. COULD YOU BLAME SAM FOR BEING SURPRISED? MURPHY DIDN'T HAVE TO GET SO MAD...
I SAID... A GOOD FAIRY, CROWDER! ANNIE'S SURE OF IT!
... AND SHE'S GOING TO STAY SURE! YOU'RE NOT GOING TO SPOIL THINGS FOR HER, CROWDER. UNDERSTAND? ONE WORD FROM YOU, AND...
AND WHAT? DON'T YOU THREATEN ME! I KNOW MY RIGHTS! DON'T YOU MANHANDLE ME!
OKAY! JUST REMEMBER, CROWDER! MAYBE YOU'RE PROUD OF BEING THE MEANEST CHARACTER IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD, BUT YOU'RE NOT GOING TO SPOIL THINGS FOR THAT KID!
MEAN, AM I?! HOW ELSE DO YOU GET ALONG IN THIS WORLD?
I SUPPOSE YOU'D LIKE ME TO GET ALL SOFT AND GOOEY, WOULDN'T YOU? WHEN YOU'RE SOFT, PEOPLE WALK ALL OVER YOU!
HOW WOULD YOU KNOW? JUST KEEP AWAY FROM THAT KID, CROWDER!

KEEP *AWAY!* SURE, SAM KEPT AWAY! BUT NOBODY *ELSE* DID! WORD GETS AROUND. EVERY MORNING, THERE IT WAS... A FULL PITCHER OF LEMONADE. THAT'S ALL SAM'S CUSTOMERS TALKED ABOUT...

SO *THAT'S* THE LITTLE GIRL! I WONDER WHO REALLY *DOES* FILL HER PITCHER FOR HER...

SO *YOU'VE* HEARD ABOUT HER *TOO!* FINE *THING*, ISN'T IT? YOU'D THINK THE LAW WOULD GIVE A MAN SOME *PROTECTION!* THE LITTLE *BRAT!* A LOT THE *LAW* CARES IF I LOSE MONEY...

HER AND HER *FAIRY TALES!* SHE PROBABLY FILLS THE PITCHER *HERSELF!* SHE'S *SMART! TOO SMART!* WHAT'LL IT BE?

IT WAS *GOING* TO BE *TWO ICE-CREAM SODAS*, BUT WE'VE *CHANGED* OUR *MINDS!*

TWO LEMONADES, LITTLE GIRL...

THE MORE SAM COMPLAINED, THE MORE HIS CUSTOMERS BOUGHT FROM THE KID. HAH! THEY CERTAINLY WERE EASY TO *FOOL*...

M-M-M! THAT SURE WAS *GOOD LEMONADE*, ANNIE!

OF *COURSE* IT WAS! ANYTHING THE *GOOD FAIRIES* MAKE JUST *HAS* TO BE GOOD!

SO THAT WAS THE STORY. SAM TOLD HARRIS, THE TOBACCO SALESMAN, THE WHOLE THING... AND THE WAY HARRIS LOOKED AT SAM, YOU'D HAVE THOUGHT SAM HAD *KILLED* SOMEONE...

SO... *THAT'S* WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT!

THAT'S WHAT IT'S ALL *ABOUT!* AND *YOU* DON'T HAVE TO *LOOK* AT ME LIKE THAT!

IN *THIS* LIFE, YOU *MAKE SURE* THAT PEOPLE *KNOW* THEY *CAN'T TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOU*... IF YOU'RE *SMART!* AND *I'M SMART!*

YEAH... *SURE*, MISTER CROWDER! *SURE!*

HARRIS DESPISED SAM TOO! IT WAS OBVIOUS! WELL, LET HIM! ONE THING WAS CERTAIN! HE'D NEVER TRY TO GET THE BETTER OF SAM! HE KNEW SAM'S REPUTATION! AND SAM KNEW THAT HARRIS WAS JUST TRYING TO GET BACK AT HIM WHEN HE LEFT AND STOPPED OUTSIDE...

I'LL HAVE A LEMONADE, ANNIE! AND AFTER I FINISH IT, I'LL HAVE ANOTHER...

A LOT SAM CARED WHAT HARRIS THOUGHT! BY CLOSING TIME, SAM HAD FORGOTTEN ALL ABOUT HIM...

OUTSIDE, ANNIE WAS CLOSING DOWN HER STAND TOO, COVERING IT WITH PAPER. SAM SNICKERED. THAT MURPHY. HE EVEN WALKED ANNIE HOME NIGHTS. THE SENTIMENTAL IDIOT...

SAM LOCKED THE STORE AND WATCHED MURPHY AND ANNIE DISAPPEAR AROUND THE CORNER...

THEN HE MOVED STEALTHILY... WARILY... TO ANNIE'S LITTLE STAND... AND LIFTED THE PAPER...

...AND FILLED HER PITCHER WITH LEMONADE...

...AND WALKED ON HOME, SMILING INSIDE. WHO'D FIGURE SAM WAS THE ONE? EVERYONE KNEW SAM WASN'T THE KIND TO GO SOFT OVER A DIRTY-FACED KID! YES, SAM WAS ANNIE'S GOOD FAIRY! IT WAS THE ONLY WAY HE COULD HELP HER! AFTER ALL! HE HAD A REPUTATION TO MAINTAIN!

THE END

APPOINTMENT CANCELLED

David Holland was the kind of man whom people set their watches by. He was a teller in the bank and his life was as regulated as the bank audits. The schedule never varied. Up at seven, breakfast at seven-fifteen, catch the seven-thirty bus, reach the bank at eight-five, and enter through the side door at eight-six. Morning after morning. Day after day, through a lot of days, twenty years of them.

Nobody in town knew anything about him. He'd been hired by old Mr. Dunker and when the old man had died, David stayed on as a fixture. Everybody knew him. He knew everybody—yet, he was a stranger. The town was small and prosperous. There were no secrets. People knew all the skeletons in everybody's closet. But not David's. Actually, no one believed there was anything to know. A man reached sixty and all the years behind him were a void.

The folks figured that old Mr. Dunker knew, but he was dead, so they took David for granted, and set their watches by him. Then, one day, a man turned up. A seedy man in his late fifties. He was sitting on the porch of Mrs. Green's boarding house, where David lived. As David came up the steps, he stared at the other man.

"Luke," he said. "What do you want?"

"That's no way to greet a friend," Luke said. "I'll be brief. I need money. You'll get it for me—or else tomorrow the whole town is going to know about you."

"But that was so long ago, Luke," David said.

"People in this kind of a town don't care. They won't have a jailbird handling their money."

David sighed. "All right, Luke. I don't know how you found me. But you're here. The only man living who knows the truth about me. I was a forger, I served time. But for twenty years, I've been straight. Dunker knew, but he gave me a chance. Maybe the others won't. What do you want?"

"Meet me by the monument, at ten o'clock. We'll talk then," Luke said. He rose and walked away, swallowed by the gloom.

David went to his room. He sat a long time. At last, he opened a drawer and took out a revolver. He put it in his pocket, sat on the bed thinking. Suddenly, he was snapped out of his reverie. The clock of the North Street Church was tolling ten.

He hurried towards the monument, late for an appointment for the first time in twenty years. As he approached the square, he saw a crowd milling around at the base of the monument. Pushing his way through, he looked down at Luke, who was lying crushed and bleeding.

"What happened?" David asked.

A man said, "He was running across the street, a car hit him. Hit and run driver. He's hurt bad. Happened a few minutes after ten. Wondered what would make a man run against traffic like that?"

"Maybe he was late for an appointment," David said.

He walked to the bridge that spanned the river and threw the revolver into it, after leaving the hospital where they had brought Luke. He wouldn't need it any more. Death had cancelled the appointment. For once, he was glad that he had been late . . .